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Rhode Island Baptist State
Convention, May 12, 1875.

SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

RHODE ISLAND

BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION,

MAY 12, 1875.



Anal.

HYMNS,

ODE AND DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED AT THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE FORMATION OF THE

RHODE ISLAND

Baptist State Convention,

MAY 12, 1875.

[FIVE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED.]

PROVIDENCE:
J. A. & R. A. REID, PRINTERS.
1875.

~~221/2 548~~

US14060.15

1875, Dec. 13.

*Title of
Sam'l A. Yeager, M.D.,
of Boston.
(Ob. El. 1851.)*

At a meeting of the Executive Board, held in East Providence, it was voted:

"That the exercises of the semi-centennial celebration, embracing the discourses, ode, hymns, etc., be printed in a pamphlet form, under the direction of the Committee of Arrangements, consisting of Alexis Caswell, Chairman, George B. Peck, and James Boyce. (Reuben A. Guild afterwards added to the Committee.) Said committee to have entire discretion and authority as to cost, number of copies, distribution, etc."

Attest:

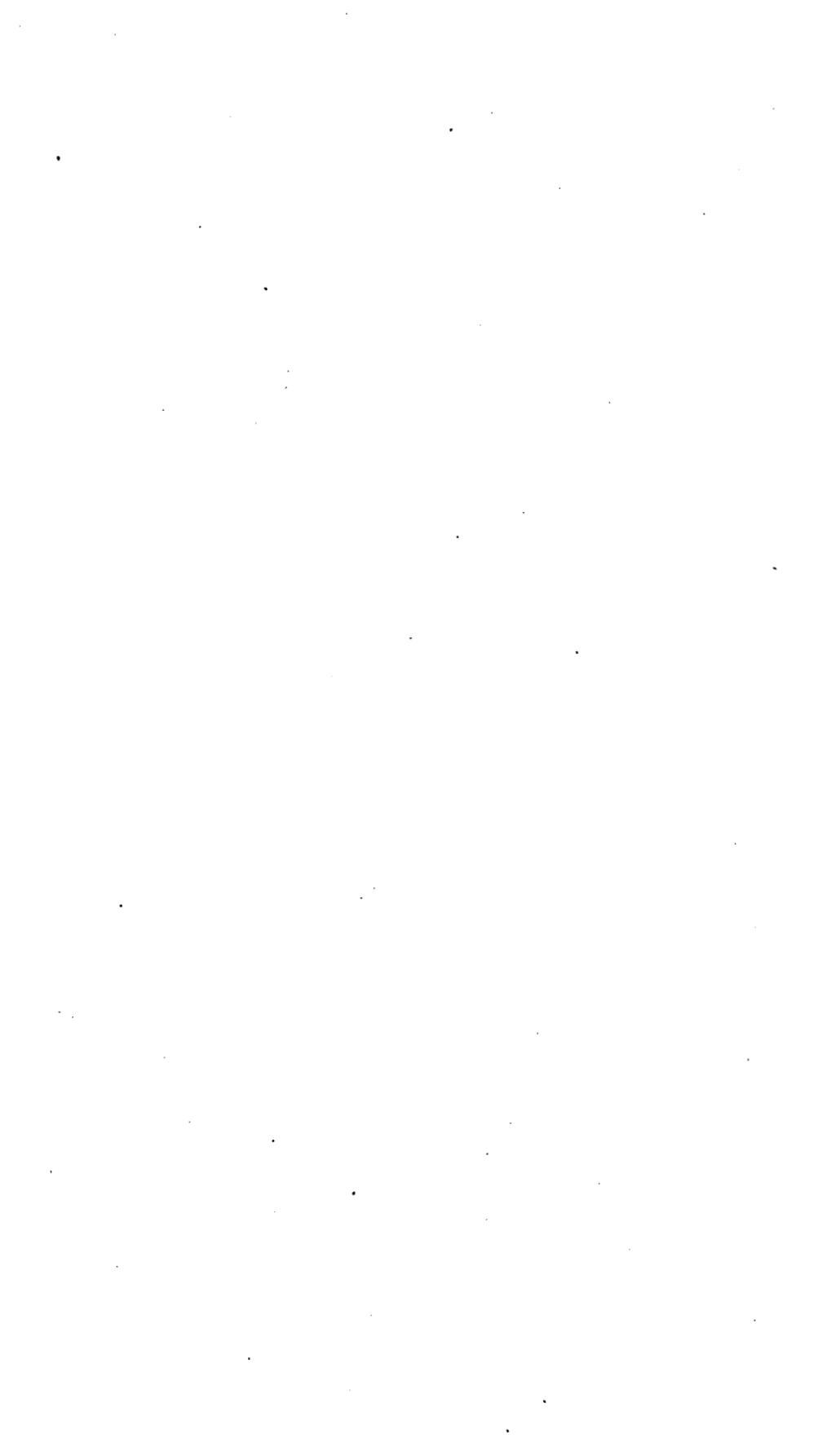
S. S. PARKER,

Secretary.

At the annual meeting of the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention, held with the Central Church, Providence, October 6, 1874, Rev. F. Denison, Rev. Dr. S. S. Parker and George B. Peck were appointed a committee to consider a plan for the proper celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Convention. This committee subsequently reported a plan, which was adopted, as follows :

1. That our jubilee anniversary be held May 12, 1875, with the First Baptist Church in Providence, and that, when the Convention closes its present session, it adjourn to meet at the time and place here mentioned.
2. That the forenoon be given to suitable devotional exercises and a discourse, by Rev. A. H. Granger, D.D., on the history of the Convention, with a jubilee hymn by Rev. F. Denison and a commemorative ode by Rev. S. D. Phelps, D. D.
3. That the afternoon be given to proper devotions, with a discourse from the President, Rev. C. E. Barrows, on the development of Baptist principles in Rhode Island, and a discourse by Rev. N. M. Williams, D. D., on New Testament church polity, followed by remarks from the fathers.
4. That the evening be given to devotions and a discourse by Rev. J. T. Smith, on the relation of Baptist principles to the evangelization of our country, followed by an original hymn by Rev. P. Gurney, and such conference as may be proper.
5. That Rev. Alexis Caswell, D. D., Brother G. B. Peck and Deacon J. Boyce be a committee to carry out this general plan.
6. That our Secretary, Rev. S. S. Parker, D. D., be requested to prepare a tabular view of the anniversaries of the Convention, to be a part of our jubilee report.

The foregoing plan was successfully carried out under direction of the Committee of Arrangements. The anniversary services were held with the First Baptist Church, Providence, agreeably to the programme announced, and the discourses, etc., which follow, were duly delivered.



HISTORY
OF THE
RHODE ISLAND
BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION,

1825-1875.

A

SEMI-CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

DELIVERED MAY 12, 1875.

Abraham H. Granger
BY REV. A. H. GRANGER, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE FOURTH BAPTIST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE.



HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

ON the 12th of May, 1825, a small company of earnest men gathered in the vestry of this house for the purpose of organizing a Convention which should bring the churches of our denomination in this Commonwealth into fraternal relations, and make them fellow-laborers in the cause of our common Master. A half a century has passed away since that morning dawned. We, to-day, as we look back, behold a great chasm between us and the year 1825. A few brethren, now advanced in life, were then just entering upon the responsibility of manhood ; others were but school-boys ; while more date the beginning of their earthly existence years later. But these changes are not limited to individuals. The church and the world present a widely different aspect to-day ; so different, that it is even difficult for us to go back in imagination a half a century, and picture the scenes in which our fathers were actors. We can hardly appreciate the difficulties with which they were surrounded, when, in that day of small things, they laid the foundation of an organization which has exerted a highly beneficial influence upon our denomination in this State. It is not too much to say, that, under God, we mainly owe our growth for the last fifty years, to the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention. It is eminently befitting, therefore, that we gather here to-day to celebrate its

fiftieth anniversary. To recount the deeds of the fathers, and to sum up the results of the labors of a half century in the work of home evangelization, will not only awaken gratitude, but inspire hope.

The men who came to the shores of the Narragansett to build for themselves homes in this wilderness, brought with them the institutions of Christianity. They came to secure a larger civil and religious liberty than could be enjoyed in the adjacent colonies. They were sincere and earnest men; men of character; men of principle. As Mr. Callender, in his century sermon, has said: "The first set of men who came here were a pious generation; men of virtue and godliness, notwithstanding their tincture of enthusiasm, which was not peculiar to them." He admits that "it is not very unlikely that some persons of a very different genius and spirit from the first settlers might intrude themselves, and use this liberty as an occasion of the flesh." It would be strange, indeed, if men who felt restless under the civil and ecclesiastical restrictions of a polity which compelled all to contribute to the support of the state church, and limited the rights of citizenship to members of that church, should not seek the freer air of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, though they had little sympathy with the principles of its founders. The circumstances under which this colony was planted necessarily made it the resort of men of very different religious and political principles; but it never merited the reproach cast upon it by Cotton Mather, "a colluvies of Anti-nomians, Anabaptists, Familists, Quakers, Infidels, and everything but Catholics and Christians." As to the first of these we have enough to-day, and, in the judgment of charity, some of the latter. Had our neighbors in olden times, instead of banishing errorists, converted them to the truth as it is in Jesus, and so retained them at home, they would have had less occasion to reproach this colony for their alleged subsequent misconduct.

We smile to-day at the thought that there is anything tending to moral or religious laxity in the principles or practices of our denomination. In soundness of evangelical teaching we yield the precedence to none. Our firm advocacy of the voluntary principle in religion was doubtless the occasion, in years past, of anxiety and alarm to many. They looked upon it as equivalent to a surrender of the colony to irreligion and immorality. But Christian churches have flourished here for two hundred years, illustrating the beneficent working of that principle, and to-day it makes a part of the fundamental law of every state in our Union. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Baptists are not now and never have been solely responsible for the moral and religious condition of the people of this Commonwealth. It is a responsibility which they have shared in common with other religious denominations. Rhode Island never was a Baptist State in the sense that Massachusetts and Connecticut were Congregationalist, or Virginia Episcopalian. It is true the first settlers were either Baptists or soon became such, and the first churches were of our order. This church and the First Church of Newport were organized years before any other denomination of Christians appeared. But our Baptist fathers placed no restrictions upon the religious acts of men of another faith. The Quakers early came, and had their silent worship, by the side of their more demonstrative Baptist brethren, protected by laws applicable alike to both. Their scruples were always respected ; they were exempted from military duty in time of war, though required to aid with their substance in the public defence. Rhode Island was an asylum for Quakers from the other colonies of New England ; consequently they were relatively numerous here, and exerted a decided influence in the affairs of church and state.

The author to whose century sermon, delivered in 1738, I have already referred, says that there were at that time

in the colony thirty-three churches or meetings in all—eleven Baptist, eleven Quaker, six Congregational, and five Episcopal. The Baptists then had three churches in Newport, and one in each of the other nine towns on the main, except Greenwich. Of these churches, at least two, one at Newport and one at Westerly, were Sabbatarian. At that time the Quakers appear to have been as numerous as the Baptists, and according to the statement of Dr. McSparren, in his "America Dissected," written a few years later, the leading men of the colony were of that faith. The first Congregational and Episcopal churches were exotics, planted here by missionaries sustained from abroad, and for years had only a small membership. I find no evidence, however, that our churches received any extraneous aid prior to the year 1800, and then from a society to which the churches were to some extent contributing, and in whose management they had a voice. No missionaries of our denomination were employed within the limits of the State before that year. Whatever work of home evangelization was done was performed by preachers who gave their services gratuitously. As pastors then in the main sustained themselves from their own personal resources, they felt more at liberty to engage in missionary work than they do to-day. The membership of the churches, also, was usually scattered over a large extent of territory, affording an earnest pastor ample opportunities for missionary labor. To the close of the eighteenth century this appears to have been the only agency employed by the Baptists to supply the spiritual wants of the destitute.

The year 1802 marked the beginning of a new era, for on the 26th of May of that year was organized at Boston the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. The name would seem to imply that as an organization it belonged exclusively to that Commonwealth; but it was not so in fact. The Baptists of Rhode Island were constituent members of that society, and were represented on

its first Board of Trustees by Rev. Dr. Gano, and continued to be represented there until the organization of this Convention. They contributed to its funds and enjoyed to some extent the labors of its missionaries ; and this reciprocal relation of giving and receiving continued until this body was formed in 1825, when the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society became the Massachusetts Baptist Convention. The mite societies which still exist among the women of some of our churches were first formed to aid that body. As early as 1809, the receipt of funds was acknowledged by the President of that society, Rev. Dr. Baldwin, from the mite society of the First Church, Providence, and the church of Warren ; by order of the trustees, he returns thanks to Miss E. Pitman and to Mrs. Priscilla Child for the contributions which they conveyed. It is pleasant to know that some of these little mites which took their rise from the fountain of Christian benevolence at that early date still flow with increased volume.

Of the work done by the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in Rhode Island but few records remain. We have no reason, however, to think that it was very extensive. In the summer of 1805, Rev. Asa Niles labored three months in the towns of Warwick, East Greenwich, and North Kingstown. His mission was successful, and between forty and fifty were hopefully converted. Three years later, the pastor of this church, Rev. Dr. Gano, under the auspices of that society, visited most of the State lying west of the Bay and the Blackstone river, preaching every day and evening, and subsequently reported the general condition of the denomination in that section. In some places he saw indications of spiritual decay, and shrewdly notes the cause. He says : "It has appeared obvious to me that one great cause of the decay of many of the churches in this State originates in the total neglect of supporting the gospel according to the plain command of the Divine Lawgiver, who will not

suffer his laws to be infacted with impunity." In early colonial times, when the people were poor and with difficulty supplied their ordinary wants, it was probably necessary that the ministry should be mainly self-sustained. The trouble was that this state of things continued when the occasion which had called it into existence had passed away. Everybody familiar with home missionary work knows that even to-day this great hindrance to the progress of the gospel is not entirely removed.

These are the only records of missionary work in this State during the twenty-three years in which the churches in Rhode Island connected with the Warren Association coöperated with the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. For it should be borne in mind that prior to the organization of this Convention there was no bond of union between the churches in different parts of the State. State lines were then entirely ignored in ecclesiastical organizations. The majority of the churches in the Warren Association, then, as in years previous, was in Massachusetts, while the churches occupying the southern and western part of the State were connected with the Stonington Union Association. There was no bond, save that of a common brotherhood, between the Baptists of different parts of our Commonwealth ; no organization through which they could jointly labor for the spiritual good of the unevangelized. Like Manassah of old, they were divided in Israel, and hence shorn of not a little of their moral power. The time, however, had come when a change was demanded ; when a new organization was called for, which should develop the latent power of the churches and enlist them in the work of home evangelization.

It is not easy to portray the real condition of the denomination in this State fifty years ago. It had undergone marked changes during the previous century. The

Baptists were no longer a unit. The divergencies which even then had begun to appear had increased and hardened until they had culminated in the formation of four distinct bodies. Looking at them, however, as a unit, we say that the eleven churches reported in 1738 had increased to forty-four. Of these, eleven were connected with the Warren Association, seven with the Stonington Union Association, and three regular Baptist churches unassociated; making twenty-one in all, with a membership of 3,887. The six-principle Baptists had twelve churches and about 1,000 members. The Freewills had nine churches, with 700 members. The Sabbatarians had at least two churches, whose membership is unknown, but probably not large. It is evident from these statistics that the growth of the denomination in this State up to the time that this Convention was formed had not been rapid. There was need of the introduction of new life and of new methods of action.

The first effective movement towards the formation of a State Convention was made at the anniversary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in May, 1824. A meeting of the friends of the measure was held in Boston, when the subject was discussed and preliminary steps taken. In the September following, at the meeting of the Warren Association, at Attleboro', the subject was again called up, and "Brethren Gano, Wayland and Hall were appointed a committee to consider the expediency of forming a Convention of the Baptist denomination of the States of Massachusetts and Rhode Island." On the next day the committee reported, favoring the organization of such a Convention, and recommending the appointment of six delegates to represent the Association in that body. The report was accepted, and Brethren Gano, Wayland, Hall, Gammell, J. Coggeshall and J. Allen were appointed delegates.

It will be noted that the original proposition was to form a Convention of the Baptist denomination of

Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Dr. Wayland, who was a member of the committee which made the report, and also a delegate, was then pastor of the First Baptist Church, Boston. Whether it was thought that the brethren of Rhode Island were too few to make such an organization effective we know not, but it is manifest that there was subsequently a change in the plan. The brethren here seem to have asserted their independence. The Rhode Island Baptist State Convention was formed, and soon after the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society became the Massachusetts Baptist Convention.

On the 12th of May, 1825, fifty years ago to-day, a meeting was held in the vestry of this house for the purpose of organizing a Baptist State Convention. Of that meeting we have no record. We know not, therefore, what churches were represented, or how numerous was the gathering. Meetings of this character were not then reported with the fullness and accuracy which is seen to-day. Rev. Dr. Benedict, who probably acted as Secretary of the meeting, furnished an article for the columns of the *Watchman*, from which we learn that "the meeting was addressed by several brethren, who explained the nature and design of the proposed Convention, gave a view of the great need of such an institution in this State, and urged its immediate formation." As the result of their deliberations, it was voted to organize a Convention, and a constitution was presented, which, after some discussion, was accepted.

It would certainly be very gratifying to be able to present to-day a life-like picture of that gathering. It would afford no little satisfaction to bring before you the honored men, who, a half century ago, originated this Convention. But they have, with few exceptions, passed away; nor have I been able to secure from survivors the desired information. Memory in this case, like many others, refuses to supply the missing links.

The organization of the Convention was not, however,

perfected on that 12th day of May. It was thought advisable to adjourn to the 4th of August ensuing, to give time for further reflection. At the appointed time the Convention reassembled. We are told that "the constitution was again read, and after some modifications, was adopted." The organization of the body was then completed by the election of officers:

Rev. Stephen Gano was chosen President; Rev. David Benedict, Secretary; Hugh H. Brown, Treasurer.

Managers—Rev. Messrs. William Gammell, Flavel Shurtliff, Silas Hall, Peter Ludlow, Jr., Alva Woods, Nicholas Branch, Bartlett Pease, John C. Welsh, John Allen, Elbridge Gale, and Brethren Nathan Waterman, Jr., and Seth Hunt.

These names show us who sympathized with the movement, and what churches were ready to coöperate with the body, viz.: The First and Second Churches, of Providence; The Second Church, of Newport; and the Churches of Warren, Bristol, Tiverton, Pawtuxet, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island; and of West Wrentham, Attleboro', and New Bedford, Massachusetts. These churches were all connected with the Warren Association. Nor were state lines at all regarded in its formation. Churches in the adjacent parts of Massachusetts were connected with this body until 1836; nor has the church at Sheldonville, formerly West Wrentham, ever ceased to be a member.

I may, perhaps, as well say here that funds were appropriated and missionary labor expended by this Convention, for some years, on Massachusetts soil. The foundation of the First Baptist Church in Fall River was laid by the agent of this body. For years Deacon Enoch French represented that then feeble church in our annual meetings; and once, at least, did this Convention hold its session in Fall River. When, therefore, in 1832, the Massachusetts Baptist Convention appropriated \$400 to this body, it was to aid in supplying the

destitute in a portion of that Commonwealth as well as in our own ; or rather it was refunding to us money which we had already expended on fields which really belong to them.

That was a day of small things in every department of benevolent work. The enterprises of the denomination were then in their infancy, nor was there at that time that division of Christian labor which has since been adopted with such signal advantage. It would seem as though an infant society, whose income the first year was only \$325, and of this more than two-thirds devoted by the donors to the foreign field, would have found scope and verge enough for the pittance remaining among the needy of the home field ; but this Convention in her youth spreads her skirts as wide as the best endowed institution of the present day. In the act of incorporation secured in 1826, it is styled "The Rhode Island Baptist State Convention, for missionary and other purposes," thus leaving the body free to enter upon any enterprise which its members deemed expedient. In 1827, we are told that the work of the Convention embraced four objects : "Foreign and domestic missions, the education of pious young men for the ministry, and the publication of a religious newspaper."

Under its auspices a paper called the *Religious Messenger* was started in 1826, and continued for two or three years, absorbing a portion of the contributions of the churches, and then, as might naturally have been anticipated, died.

I find no record of any appropriation to young men preparing for the work of the ministry, and presume that none was ever made. Foreign missions were then the leading object of Christian benevolence in the denomination ; it was the foreign rather than the home field which first evoked the spirit of missions among us ; to this nearly half of the funds contributed to the treasury of the Convention was specially designated, and an agent employed to make collections in the churches of the State for the Burmah mission,

But these really extraneous matters were gradually discarded, and the Convention settled down to its legitimate work with one prime object in view, to assist the feeble churches of our State, and to preach the gospel to the destitute within our bounds. For more than forty years this has been its exclusive work, save as it could indirectly foster other good enterprises.

What now has been the record of the Convention in this work during this long series of years? We may, for convenience sake, divide the half century into three periods; the first extending from 1825 to 1840; the second from 1840 to 1855; the third from 1855 to 1875. Though the income of the Convention, available for its appropriate work, during the first fifteen years of its existence, was small, beginning with \$95 the first year and rising to \$1,112 in 1837, yet no little good was accomplished during that period. The organization of the Convention at that particular time was specially providential. There was an urgent call for Christian work; fields were opening which invited the servants of Christ; new villages were springing up, and some of the old churches which had long been cumberers of the ground, were falling to decay and their material was available for the organization of more thrifty and energetic bodies; but better than all there were manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power, giving the churches a healthful growth and blessing the people with hallowed influences.

More than four thousand persons were added to the churches of the Warren Association in the ten years from 1830 to 1840; and though the Association underwent great changes during that period, the churches in Massachusetts, with a single exception, withdrawing, and the churches in the South county, heretofore connected with the Stonington Union Association, now uniting with the Warren, yet, through all these changes, the converting influences of the Spirit continued the

same. From year to year the work of God went on with unabated power.

We can see how eminently favorable such a time was for the commencement of missionary operations in the State. During this period churches were organized and houses of worship erected at Woonsocket, Valley Falls and Lime Rock, and the first two named had become self-sustaining. A church was formed at Westerly, which in the first year of its existence was visited by a work of grace which added seventy to its membership and rendered further aid from this body needless. Churches were also organized at East Greenwich, Natick and Charlestown, and the old church at Wickford, which had only a nominal existence, was resuscitated.

The work of the Convention seems to have infused new life into the denomination, especially in the rural parts of the State. It introduced there a new class of preachers, well educated, earnest in the Master's cause, and very unlike the unlettered, secularized clergy to which many of the people were accustomed to listen. Rev. Bradley Miner, at Woonsocket, Rev. P. B. Byram, at Valley Falls, Rev. Dr. Stone, at Wickford, and Rev. Dr. Palmer, at Westerly, brought into their respective localities an element of progress whose influence is still felt. While I recognize the fact that valuable services were rendered by many others, who are worthy of mention to-day, I may say that these men were peculiarly fitted for the places and work assigned them in the providence of God.

It is worthy of note, also, that during this period the Convention gradually gathered around itself the strength of the denomination in the State. In 1825 it had the sympathy of only a portion of the churches, while in 1840 there was not a regular Baptist church within our borders not identified with it.

Let us pass now to the second period, from 1840 to 1855. Some of us can remember how that period opened

with the great work of grace which extended over all the Northern and Middle States, and in which Rhode Island richly shared. More than twenty-five hundred persons were baptized into the fellowship of the churches during the years of '40, '41 and '42. While it must be admitted that human imperfections somewhat marred the excellence of that work, still time has shown it to be a work of God. Men were then brought into the fold of Christ, who have proved to be earnest Christians, honoring the Master by consistent lives.

This season of refreshing was followed by a series of untoward events, which counteracted much of the good which might otherwise have been secured.

The Dorr war, as it is often styled, arrayed brother against brother in bitter partisanship. Nor have all traces of that bitterness been removed by the lapse of thirty-five years. It lowered the standard of piety in the churches; it created alienations and divisions; and it turned the popular mind away from religious themes. Then came the Millerite delusion in regard to the second advent of our Lord in May, 1843. The immediate reappearance of the Son of God was maintained by such plausible interpretations of prophecy that some of the very elect seemed to have been deceived. Of these many saw their mistake long ago and renounced their error, while others are to-day in the ranks of fanaticism, still looking for the speedy advent of their Lord, though disappointed again and again. While our churches suffered far less in proportion to their membership than the minor denominations of Baptists, still few of them escaped entirely unharmed.

But worse than both of these in its influence upon the churches, were the differences of opinion in regard to the best means to be employed for the conversion of men, and the upbuilding of the church of Christ. Some lost faith in revivals, and in the measures employed to promote them; others were as zealous in their advocacy;

and while they discussed men and measures, they forgot to preach Christ crucified to the sinning and the dying, and to plead for the gift of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert.

When we bear these things in mind, can we wonder that the years which followed were years of spiritual dearth, alike unfavorable to missionary work, and to the growth of feeble churches? No part of the past half a century was so barren of spiritual results as from 1843 to 1853. Still there was progress during this period, though the times were unpropitious. The labors of this Convention on the home field were by no means in vain.

In 1842 the second church in Hopkinton was formed, which, five years later, having built and paid for its house of worship, was able to dispense with further aid. This is still an efficient branch of our Zion, and has refunded long ago all that we ever expended on that field.

The same year the Rev. J. Brayton was appointed by the Convention to labor at Natick and vicinity. In the prosecution of his mission he first organized a church of twenty-five members at the village of Lippitt, called the Lippitt and Phenix Church, and then commenced a series of meetings which resulted in the baptism of seventy persons on profession of their faith in Christ. During the next four years a house of worship was erected, and the church became self-sustaining. This is the prosperous church at Phenix of to-day, having dropped the "Lippitt" from their name long ago.

In 1846 it was believed that the time had come when special effort should be made for denominational enlargement in this city. It was apparent that there were fields open to evangelistic efforts which we ought to occupy. After due consideration two points were selected; the one on Smith's Hill, and the other in the south part of the city, and a Sunday-school gathered and meetings established at each.

Of the two interests thus begun simultaneously, the

south has had the more rapid growth, being planted in a more favorable locality. The South Church was organized in the following year. Subsequently it united with the Fifth Church in building a house of worship, and the united churches took the name of the Friendship Street Church, in 1855. For twenty years this has been an honored branch of our Zion, and though weakened for a time by the dismissal of members to form the flourishing interest on Cranston street, it is to-day as strong and vigorous as ever. The interest begun on Smith's Hill, now almost thirty years ago, has likewise passed through many changes. It was first the Eighth Church, and then, having removed to its present location, it took the name of the Jefferson Street Church. Having, through the coöperation of the other churches of the city, secured an admirable house of worship, we trust their days of darkness and trial are over, and that a future of growth and usefulness awaits them.

Standing where we do to-day we can see the wisdom of the movement of 1846. It has given two churches to the denomination in the city; it has also provided for the spiritual wants of our ever increasing population. The policy early inaugurated and continued for almost two centuries, of concentrating the strength of the denomination at a central point, was wise under the then existing circumstances. It is better to have one or two strong churches than it is a half a score of feeble, dying ones. But when from a town of a few thousand inhabitants, Providence had grown to a city of first fifty and then a hundred thousand, and when business had driven the population from the centre to the extremes, such a policy was no longer possible. Those remote from the centre demanded religious privileges, and if not furnished by us, would have been by others.

There are other results of the labors of the Convention during this second period of its history which might be named. Churches were formed at Lonsdale, Old

Warwick and Quidnick, which exerted a heathful influence in their several localities. Though their growth has not been as rapid as some others, they do credit to our denomination. But I pass to the last period, from 1855 to 1875.

I see here to-day those who, during the last twenty years have mainly shaped the policy of this Convention. If there have been any errors committed in the administration of this Christian trust, during this period, on us rests the responsibility. Modesty might therefore suggest, that this portion of our history be left to the judgment and criticism of those who shall come after us. But this review of the half century would be imperfect, without some reference to these more recent events. What scenes of thrilling interest rise before the mind, as we survey the last twenty years! Who would wish to pass through those years again, with their intense anxiety and solicitude? We had first the glorious work of grace of 1857-8, whereby fifteen hundred persons were added to our churches, and the moral conscientiousness of all our people was quickened and elevated. God was manifestly preparing us for the terrible trial just at hand. Then came the war of the rebellion, with its scenes of excitement and anguish, which many of us never can forget. Wounds were made too deep even for time to heal. We, as individuals and as a denomination, shared the fortunes of our State and nation, and bore our part in the struggles and sacrifices which the hour demanded. Yet amid all this commotion the kingdom of Christ advanced, and this Convention continued its ministry of mercy, strengthening the weak hands, and giving the bread of life to the famishing. Aid was given to churches located in communities where they are the only representatives of Christianity, like Lime Rock and old Warwick. Years may elapse before these churches are self-sustaining, yet they are really doing missionary work in their respective fields, and therefore may claim our support.

New interests have sprung up within the last twenty years, which have been fostered by this body, and which promise at no distant day to make efficient churches. Prominent among these are the Broadway and South Providence churches in this city, and the Second, East Providence, on the eastern banks of the Seekonk. By the aid of friends the first and the last are now finishing their houses of worship, and hope soon to be able to rely on their own resources for support.

It is one of the pleasing features in the history of the Convention, especially for the last ten years, that so large sums have been given for special objects, apart from the usual contributions of the churches. Thousands of dollars have been given in this city and vicinity for the completion of houses of worship, where aid was indispensable to success.

For nearly ten years we have had one, and sometimes two, men in the field as missionaries, sustained by special gifts from large-hearted Christian men and women. Whenever it has been clearly shown that a work needed to be done, God has always put it in the heart of one or more to furnish the requisite aid.

From the review which I have now given of the work of this Convention for the half century, it will be seen that no great enterprise has been achieved in any one year of its existence. But maintaining the even tenor of its way from year to year, it has constantly kept the work of home evangelization before the minds of our people, and we can see to-day, that the results are by no means insignificant. The twenty-one churches of fifty years ago are sixty now ; the 3,887 members have increased to 10,080. The fact that forty-four of the sixty churches in the State, have at some period of their history, received aid from this body, shows the bearing of its work on the growth of the denomination. And what it has been in the past, we believe it will be in the future.

But we should remember that this Convention, in its

work of evangelization, does not stand independent of the influences by which we are surrounded. How often has its operations been affected by seasons of religious interest and the reverse? The past half-century shows that times of refreshing from the Lord are eminently favorable to missionary efforts. Not a few of our churches date their origin from a work of grace in the communities where they are located. Others have been so strengthened that they could dispense with foreign aid. We have repeatedly seen the truth of the old maxim, "When God works, all things work." But it is in vain for us to expect the same measure of success when divine influences are withheld. God must bless the sower and the seed, or the harvest will be meagre.

The success of an organization like this, however, must depend largely on the character of the men whose services it is able to enlist. It is the glory of this Convention, that it has always had the sympathy of the most earnest Christian workers of the denomination in the State. Propriety forbids that I should speak of the living, but of some of the departed I may say a few words.

Rev. Dr. Gano, who died in 1828, had nearly reached the end of his pastorate when this body was organized, but his heart and soul were in the work of domestic missions. He advocated the formation of a State convention, and aided in launching this infant enterprise upon the tide of successful experiment. During all his pastorate not a little time and labor did he give to strictly missionary work.

Rev. J. C. Welsh, long a pastor in this State, and identified with all the interests of the denomination here, was a man of kindred spirit. For eight years he presided over this body, and till the end of life gave it his support. He recognized its work as indispensable to the growth and prosperity of the denomination in the State. Others caught from him the same spirit; and there are

those among us to-day who date their interest in this cause to words which fell from his lips.

Rev. J. N. Granger, D. D., was a man of singularly well balanced mind and character, able to look at all the interests of Christ's kingdom at home and abroad, and to embrace them all in his large heart. For nine years he was President of this Convention, and during his whole pastorate gave his hearty support to its labors. He was a man of fine executive ability, and an admirable presiding officer. Possessed of a mind clear and methodical, he could unravel the intricacies of business, while his unswerving honesty gave him the full confidence of his brethren.

Rev. Henry Jackson, D. D., succeeded Dr. Granger in the presidency, and continued in the same until his death in the early part of the year 1863. He loved the work of this Convention, and was always ready to perform any service required of him by his brethren. There was scarcely any part of the State which he did not visit repeatedly during his connection with this body. He had resigned his pastorate, and was preparing to preach the gospel at his own charges, to the needy, when his career of usefulness was suddenly cut short by death. He remembered this Convention in the disposition of his property.

These were all men whom the denomination of the State loved to honor, and who in their day bore a leading part in this body. They were men well worthy of the confidence bestowed on them by their brethren.

To mention all the others entitled to a place on this list of worthies, would be only to repeat the names of all the leading pastors and brethren of the churches whom God has called home during the last fifty years. With scarcely an exception they have aided this body in its efforts to save souls and to build up the waste places of our Zion.

I might speak also of the pastors and missionaries whom this body has aided in sustaining from time to time.

It is one of the benefits which this Convention has conferred, not only on the denomination, but on the State, that it has either directly or indirectly introduced here so many men of cultured intellect and earnest Christian spirit; men who have awakened to new life churches and communities who were dying from inaction. It may be safely affirmed that no man sustained by this body has ever proved to be unworthy of the confidence reposed in him, while many have shown the elements of true Christian leadership.

Brethren and friends, a half-century of sowing and reaping is completed. Most of the men who organized this Convention, having served well their generation, sleep with the fathers, but the institution which they formed, lives with augmented powers of usefulness. Long may it live to send forth influences, which shall gladden the hearts of the children of God, and when the men of another generation shall gather to celebrate its century, may its vigor and efficiency be increased an hundred fold.

THE
Development of Baptist Principles
IN RHODE ISLAND.

1636-1875.

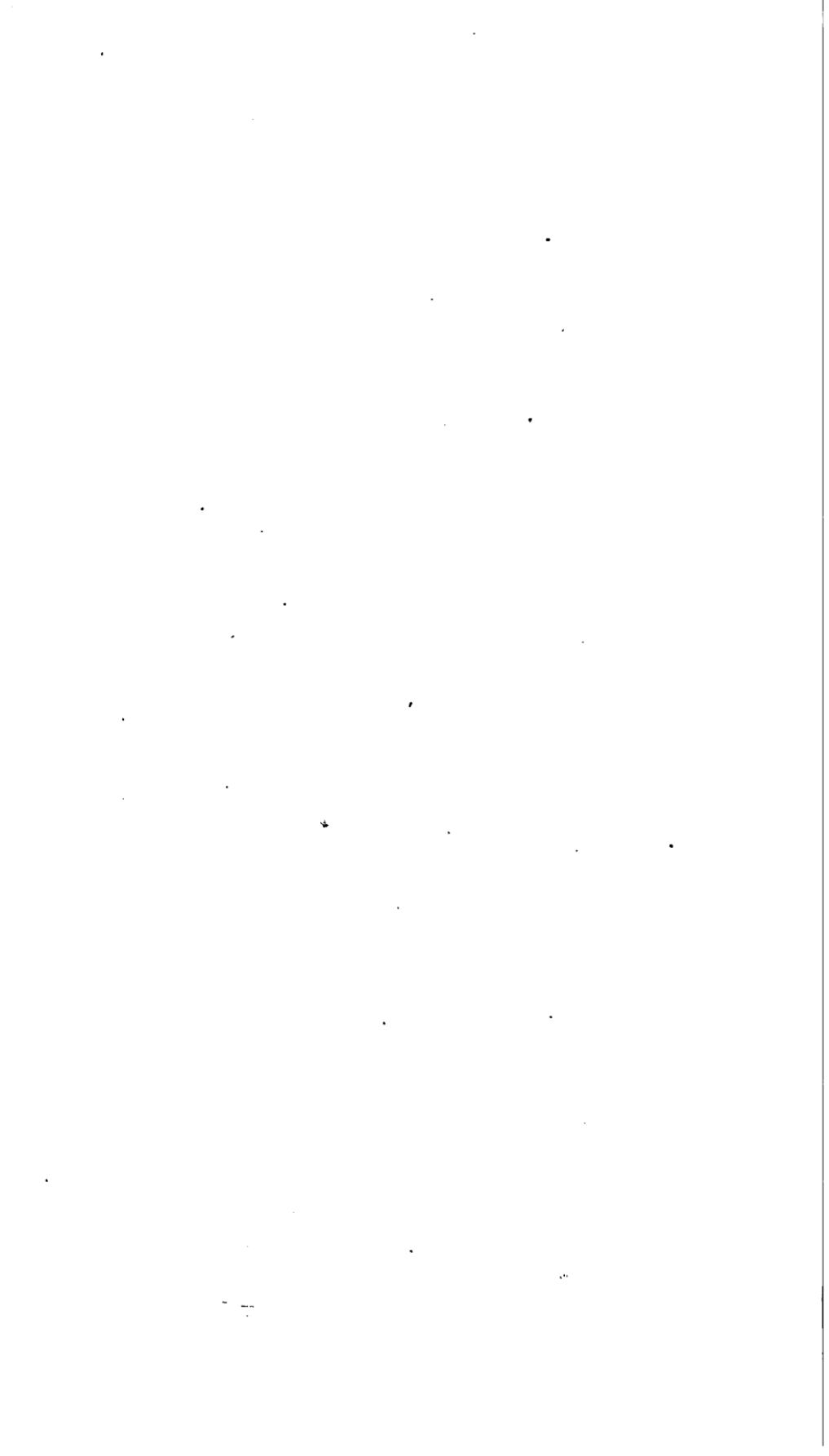
A

SEMI-CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED MAY 12, 1875.

C. E. Barrows
BY REV. C. E. BARROWS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NEWPORT.



BAPTIST PRINCIPLES.

IN the year 1636, in the opening Spring, a small company of men made a settlement within the borders of the present State of Rhode Island. They were but a handful in number, poor in worldly possessions, outcasts indeed from the society of civilized men; and they constructed for themselves but the rudest dwellings in the unbroken wilderness. The event, so inauspicious apparently in its beginnings, has, however, proved to be one of the most memorable, not only in American history, but in the annals of the world. For here was inaugurated a government on an entirely new basis, embracing principles hitherto unknown or unrecognized in the polity of nations.

Though now for the first time incorporated into a civil constitution, the principles themselves were as old as Christianity. Baptist principles may indeed be traced through all the Christian centuries from the beginning. They furnish a history—yet to be written—parallel with that of the Papal hierarchy, which too early acquired an almost absolute supremacy over the religious thinking of Europe. They appeared in the rise of the Donatists in the fourth century, of the Waldenses in the twelfth, of the Hussites in Bohemia who heralded the Reformation in the sixteenth. They were potent among the people of England from the time of Wickliffe to that of the Com-

monwealth. But watched with jealous care these principles were constantly smothered, and wherever one bolder than his fellows arose to proclaim them, his voice was instantly hushed in martyrdom.

Our task is not, however, to discover the origin of these principles, nor to show their divine authority, nor to follow them in their earlier manifestations, but to indicate how they have been developed here within the limits of this small State. Thus circumscribed, the theme is so large that it must be imperfectly treated in a single discourse. The history of the development of Baptist principles in Rhode Island, covers the beginnings in this country of a large and influential body of Christians, as well as the formation of a civil State. For, as Massachusetts was settled by Congregationalists, Maryland by Roman Catholics, Pennsylvania by Quakers, and Virginia by Episcopalian, so Rhode Island was settled chiefly by Baptists, whose principles gave shape to its government, and direction to its subsequent history. Here Baptists for the first time in the history of the world, were permitted to have a controlling influence in the framing of a civil government, and here their earliest churches in this new world were formed. Here, then, we have the practical outcome of their doctrines, in regard both to the state and the church. Here their principles appear in absolutely new conditions, are brought to the test of actual experiment. With the settlement of this State begins very naturally a new chapter in our ecclesiastical history.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.

Before proceeding to discuss their development, it may be well to call to mind what some of these principles are. The one that will first occur to almost every mind is that of liberty, religious and civil, with which the early history of this State is intimately and most honorably connected, for whose sake indeed the State was first

settled and its government organized. This doctrine enters as the corner-stone into the very foundation of the Commonwealth, and reappears in every part of the beautiful and symmetrical superstructure. But this primary truth, so grand and sublime, and at the same time so simple and self-evident, does not stand alone, in solitary grandeur, and unrelated to other truths. It forms a part, and a necessary part, of a system. A brief statement of them will, we think, show that Baptist principles are so correlated as together to form a complex unity, a self-consistent whole. While in our present review, we shall have specially to do with the forms in which Christianity embodies itself rather than with its essential doctrines, there can be no satisfactory treatment of the former, without at least an incidental reference to the latter, since the latter determines the former. The Baptist conception of the church, grows out of the Baptist conception of Christianity itself. That which separates Baptists from Christians of other names, is not simply the quantity of water used in baptism—the difference is deeper and more fundamental in its nature.

Baptist principles may be regarded as falling into four divisions : Those pertaining, first, to the individual considered alone, and in his personal relations to God ; secondly, to the formation of Christian churches ; thirdly, to the mutual relation of churches ; and fourthly, to the relation which churches sustain to civil society and the world.

A primary truth in the kingdom of Christ is the personal nature of his religion. God addresses men personally. He lifts up and clothes with solemn dignity the individual. Every one stands in direct relations to his Maker, and is personally responsible to him. No human being can come in between a soul and its God. No one has a right to attempt to mediate. No one may dare with impunity to enter the sanctuary which belongs to God alone. Hence the doctrine of soul liberty ; of the

inalienable, the indefeasible right of private judgment; of the right of every person to examine for himself the word of God—man's authoritative rule of faith and practice, to form his own opinion as to the requirements it lays upon him, and to act upon his own convictions of duty. In the matter of religion every one must act for himself, must for himself repent of sin and believe on the Lord Jesus,—must become a new creature in Christ. This doctrine of a new life in Christ Jesus is a cardinal truth, and one that must not be obscured ; one which, if we mistake not, the Lord has sought to preserve alive in the minds of men, by the very forms in which he has clothed it.

This new life takes on a body adapted to its use, is the informing principle of the Christian church, determines its constitution,—that it shall be composed only of regenerate persons, or, in Scripture language, of “living stones,” of those who have been touched into life by the Spirit of God. The organization is the simplest possible, its function being to conserve and express the spiritual life of the members. When that life is faint, then the organization is feeble ; if that life dies, the organization expires ; but when the informing life is healthy and active, then the church is mighty, overcoming all its foes. The members of a church compose a brotherhood, each one being subject directly to Christ, the Head of the church and its Lawgiver. Every separate church is in government a unique republic, executing by the voice of the brotherhood the ordained laws. Hence the independence of the churches of all extraneous human authority, in managing their internal affairs. The church organization must not obscure, but express the doctrine of the personal responsibility of each member to Christ, and that his life is derived from personal union with him. This same spiritual fact—the new life of the members—determines also both the subjects and the form of the ordinances, which are symbols of the

new life. None are proper subjects of baptism but such as have had this experience, have entered into possession of this new life,—only believers in Christ, such as can make profession of personal faith. And the form—as a symbol—must set forth this new life, this life from death. And this experience of the soul—this death to sin and life to holiness—is connected with the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence the beautiful and expressive rite, the burial with Christ in the liquid grave and the rising with him to newness of life. Only once is a believer baptized, as only once does he enter into life; while the maintenance of this life by Christ, who is himself the bread on which it feeds, is brought visibly and symbolically to mind at the memorial table on which are placed the bread and wine—emblems of the broken body and shed blood,—the partaking of which is often repeated. The order, therefore, in which the ordinances stand is significant; the order is indeed divine, and the two ordinances form together one whole. When thus scrupulously observed they bear eloquent testimony to the truth, and shed light upon the way of salvation.

While churches are in their internal government independent of all outward control, they are not isolated bodies. They hold peculiar relations to all bodies similarly constituted, that have precisely the same conditions of membership, and are subject to precisely the same code of laws, and acknowledge allegiance to one and the same Lord. By virtue of their common relationship to Christ and his law, they are one in the truth, members of a single family, form a sisterhood—are one body indeed of which Christ is the Head. There must be consequent fellowship and community of interests, and corresponding obligations and duties.

The relation of churches to civil society and the world is two-fold. First, it is one of jealous separation: the state having no voice in the management of the churches, to prescribe to them laws or to deprive them of their

privileges ; and the churches, as such, having no control in civil affairs. Secondly, it is one of mutual service : the state throwing the shield of its protection over the churches ; and the churches inculcating the great lessons of virtue and integrity on which alone a republic may rest, and keeping before the minds of the people their higher obligations to God and his laws.

THESE PRINCIPLES IN THE SETTLEMENT OF THE STATE.

Having thus given in briefest outline a statement of Baptist principles, we are prepared to trace their history, which, even with external restraints removed, was not entirely free and uninterrupted in its course.

The men who first settled this State were twice refugees. From the relentless persecutions in England they fled, with thousands of earnest souls, to this new world, for rest and safety, only to meet with bitter disappointment. For in the colonies they encountered laws equally obnoxious, were subjected to an espionage quite as annoying, and fell under the displeasure of rulers who would tolerate no dissentients from the established faith ; and they were finally driven away, out into the further wilderness to find a home among the savages of the forest.

The New England colonies were planted by men eminent for piety, willing for the sake of their religion to brave the hardships of pioneer life. And those of the Massachusetts Bay were second to no others in devotion to religion and zeal for their faith. Solicitous for the honor of God and the maintenance of a pure church, they had nevertheless by infant baptism incorporated into that church an unholy and corrupting element, and they sought to build up the church by the use of profane means. The Puritans were not opposed to the union of church and state, if only the alliance were made with the true church—with their own. Immediately on their arrival at the Bay they established their religion, making

Puritanism the state religion of the settlement.* They sought here "freedom to worship God," but they were unwilling to grant equal freedom of worship to others. All dwelling among them must conform, and whoever dared to hesitate must be forced into conformity, not by Scripture and reason, by argument and persuasion, but by the strong arm of civil power. Hence, as heavy penalties were visited upon dissentients in the new world as in the old, the early history of Massachusetts Bay being a repetition of English history of the same period. While zealously guarding against the earliest approaches of error, and summarily chastising those venturing to differ from the authorized standards, the rulers found it impossible to secure absolute uniformity. Men would think for themselves, would study the Bible, and form their own opinions of its teachings. New and startling theories were being constantly broached. A large share of the official service was, as the records show, expended in fruitless efforts to regulate religion.

For persisting to entertain opinions of his own, Roger Williams was esteemed a dangerous man. He claimed the privilege to examine the fundamental principles of both church and state. He questioned the colony's right under the king's patent, and denied the authority of the magistrate to enforce the laws of the first table; that is, the first four commands of the decalogue, as those refer solely to man's relations to his Maker. And finally, for his bold defence of the liberty of speech and of his right to discuss the questions of government and

* The Pilgrim colony of Plymouth must be distinguished from the Puritan colony of the Massachusetts Bay, which was commenced at Salem in 1628, and two years later, in 1630, enlarged by a settlement at Boston. The planters of the latter colony, though Non-Conformists, had never separated from the English Establishment: they believed in a national church. Hubbard, *History New England*. Mass. Hist. Coll., 2d Ser. V. 109, 117. The first comers to Salem entered into a solemn covenant with God and one another, "And because they foresaw that this wilderness might be looked upon as a place of liberty, and therefore might in time be troubled with erroneous spirits, therefore they did put in one article into the confession of faith, on purpose, about the duty and power of the magistrate in matters of religion." Morton, *New England's Memorial*, pp. 145, 146. Cf. *Genesis of the New England Churches*, by Leonard Bacon, pp. 462-463.

religion, he was banished from the colony.* Referring to the opinions held by him which justified his banishment, his antagonist in a prolonged controversy, John Cotton, says: "Under pretence of maintaining liberty of conscience, purity of conscience is violated and outraged.† Before leaving England, Williams had come into contact with the Baptists and been made familiar with their articles of belief.‡ By them he had been taught many fundamental truths respecting the kingdom of Christ, and suspicion was early awakened that he cherished "principles of rigid separation and tending to Anabaptistry."§ Seed thoughts were producing their appropriate fruit, were working out their logical results; for, three years after his settlement at Providence, in March, 1639,|| he and a few others were baptized and formed themselves into a church.

We are informed that there were Baptists among the first settlers of Massachusetts Bay. "Infant Baptism," says Cotton Mather, ¶ "hath been scrupled by multitudes in our days, who have been in other points most worthy Christians, and as holy, watchful, faithful and heavenly people as, perhaps, any in the world; some few of these

* See Williams's own statement of the causes of his banishment—*Mr. Cotton's Letter examined and answered*, p. 41., *Nar. Club, Pub.*, I., 325; also Gov. Winthrop's account, *Hist. N. E.*, I., 162.; Morton's *Memorial* p. 152.; Arnold *Hist. R. I.*, I., 41. Yet Dr. Palfrey ventures to assert, that, "The sound and generous principles of a perfect freedom of conscience can scarcely be shown to have been involved in this dispute," which led to his banishment. *Hist. N. E.*, I., 413.

† Thus Cotton and Williams, the two disputants, agree in their testimony, and confirm the statements of Winthrop and Morton. *Cotton's Answer to Williams*, *Nar. Club, Pub.*, II., 24.

‡ Williams says in his *Hireling Ministry*, *None of Christ's*, London, 1652, p. 11: "Amongst so many instances dead and living, to the everlasting praise of Christ Jesus, and of His Holy Spirit, breathing and blessing where he listeth, I cannot but with honorable testimony remember that eminent Christian witness and prophet of Christ, even the despised yet beloved Samuel Howe." Quoted by Dr. Hague in his *Historical Discourse*, Providence, 1839, who explains: "A Baptist minister and pastor of a church in London, the excellent Samuel Howe, successor to John Cann, author of the marginal references to the Bible," pp. 37, 38. Crosby, *History English Baptists*, I., 164. Palfrey, *Hist. N. E.*, I., 414.

§ Morton, *Memorial*, pp. 151, 152.

|| Winthrop, *Hist. N. E.*, I., 293.; Arnold, *Hist. R. I.*, I., 107.

¶ *Magnalia*, II., 459.

people have been among the planters of New England from the beginning." Though Baptists in sentiment, they had never seen their way clear to take a decided stand for the truth, willing to remain silent on the points in which they differed from the establishment. Others, like Hanserd Knollys and John Clarke *demanded the privilege both to hold and to express their own convictions. They insisted upon full liberty of thought and worship, and since this was denied them, they determined to depart out of the province. The former went to Piscataqua, and the latter, in the Spring of 1638, took up his abode on Aquidneck, now the island of Rhode Island. A meeting house was at once built and a church gathered.† This body was doubtless of a mixed character, but it soon gave way to a distinctively Baptist church. Thus the State of Rhode Island took its rise from two centres, one at the North and the other at the South.

THE GOVERNMENT FORMED—SEPARATION OF CHURCH FROM STATE.

It had been a standing reproach against the Baptists in the mother country, and repeated in the colonies, that they denied all magistracy, and would destroy all civil government; that, if they did not themselves hold these opinions, their principles necessarily gravitated toward both civil and religious disintegration. The term Anabaptist had become a synonym for anarchist. Because they earnestly protested against the ecclesiastical functions claimed by the state, their opponents persisted

* Mr. Clarke is said to have "received his baptism in Elder Stillwell's church, in London." *Baptist Succession*, by D. B. Ray, Lexington, Ky. Clarke was certainly never a member of John Cotton's church in Boston, nor was he involved in the Antinomian controversy which so seriously rent that church, though he suffered on account of it, being disarmed, with many others, by the magistrates. *Mass. Col. Rec.*, I., 212. He arrived at Boston the first time in November, 1637, and, because the Summer had been extremely hot, went almost immediately to the north, perhaps to Piscataqua. The severity of the Winter, however, compelled him to seek a milder climate, and early in March, 1638, he settled at Aquidneck. *Ill. News*, 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, II., 23.

† Callender, *Hist. Disc.* p. 116; Winthrop, I., 297, 328.

in the accusation that they labored for the overthrow of all religion, and the utter destruction of all civil authority. In vain was the charge repelled, and their belief in civil government most solemnly asservated. Now, however, they were permitted by a most notable act to disprove the false allegation. In their settlements on the Narragansett shores, they constituted at once a civil government, and placed themselves under civil rule. At Providence, it was agreed that the inhabitants should yield "active and passive obedience" to this sovereignty "only in civil things."* On the island a more regular government was organized ; and, as though to disarm as far as possible all adverse criticism by rival and hostile colonies, and to assure themselves and all future comers that the State, though denied jurisdiction in the spiritual realm, was nevertheless clothed with divine sanctions, they declared that God was the source of civil authority, and his revealed will, so far as it pertained to the conduct of man with man, should be the fundamental law to govern in civil relations.† Thus while denying to it ecclesiastical rule, they claimed for the State authority to make and enforce laws, an authority delegated by God and recognized by His Word.

The separation of church from state was the distinctive feature of their government, the feature upon which they specially insisted, and which led the surrounding colonies to regard their settlements with aversion and alarm. With sublime faith the first planters refused to establish any religion, or even to make provision for the maintenance of any—with sublime faith, we say, for the refusal was dictated by no unfriendliness to religion, since they were "Puritans of the highest form;"‡ but by the belief that the religion of Jesus had power in itself §

* *R. I. Col. Rec.*, I., 14.

† *R. I. Col. Rec.*, I., 52.; *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. VI., 488.

‡ Callender, p. 116.

§ "Truth is strong next to the Almighty. She needs no policies or stratagems or lassanings to make her victorious." *Aesopagilia*.

and required only moral and spiritual agencies for its support and propagation. They believed that religion had no need, even if it were possible, to call to its assistance the strong arm of civil power; that the propagation of the Christian religion transcended the might of the state; that hence within the sphere of the spiritual, secular authority had no right to venture. It was therefore not toleration our fathers claimed for themselves and would have accorded to others—it was liberty. To entertain their own religious opinions and obey their own religious convictions was not a boon they craved, but a right they demanded. Other governments had occasionally been indulgent, and tolerated a diversity of religious beliefs; but our fathers affirmed that civil government had no prerogative in the matter; that belief and worship were subjects wholly outside and above its jurisdiction. Here, within their settlements, all men of whatever faith could find refuge. The law-abiding were by their government protected irrespective of religious belief. In effecting this divorce between the two realms—the civil and the ecclesiastical—our fathers were certainly making an experiment, were for the first time bringing long-cherished principles to the test. They nevertheless moved forward with assurance, believing the principle of separation to be right, to be supported by the word of God, and that his truth could not lead them astray.

It is of importance to remember, as the fact tells upon the subsequent history, that in their government our fathers sought for themselves no advantage not equally shared by all. Whatever they demanded for themselves they demanded also for others. They insisted that the privileges accorded to one religious body should be accorded to all, of whatever faith. What, then, it may be inquired, did they secure for themselves by their government? All they had ever asked for; not a theocracy, not a monopoly either of authority or of privileges—

simply equality before the law and an open field for all. It was never their purpose to inaugurate a Baptist government, but a government in which Baptists could be untrammelled and free, and their principles have a fair chance in the world of thought and opinion. It was simply an opportunity they desired, not an advantage over their opponents,—an opportunity to defend their tenets and make them known. They demanded that principles—the true and the false—should meet in a free encounter and determine which should stand,—that truth might grapple with error and vanquish it. Liberty was desired not so much for its own sake, not as an end in itself, but as the necessary condition of an ulterior and higher good.

While excluding religion from the functions of the state, the founders of this Commonwealth evidently regarded it chiefly as a refuge for Christian people fleeing from persecution, an asylum for consciences distressed on account of religion, as appears from the concluding words of their earliest code of laws: “And otherwise than thus what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the saints of the Most High walk in this Colony without molestation, in the name of the Jehovah, their God, forever and ever.”* No constructive treason against the state was to be feared, no inquisition into private opinions, no disturbance for religious acts.

The separation made in the colony had a twofold effect; it both relieved the church of magisterial interference, and devolved upon her the responsibility of her own maintenance. The voluntary principle was, as a matter of

* *R. I. Col. Rec.*, I., 190. “In her code of laws we read for the first time since Christianity ascended the throne of the Caesars, that conscience should be free, and men should not be punished for worshipping as they were persuaded, he required, a declaration which, to the honor of Rhode Island, she has never departed from.” Judge Story, *Centennial Discourse*, Salem, 1828, p. 57.

course, assured to the church of Christ. If the state had no right to dictate rules and regulations to the church, then the church had no right to expect material support from the state. The church must make provision for herself. Voluntaryism, then regarded with so much suspicion, is now the system adopted by all denominations of Christians throughout the United States, as it must of necessity be wherever the separation between church and state has been effected; and the serious discussion of this system has, within the past few years, been strongly agitating the religious public of England.

New questions touching the relation of church and state are constantly arising. Some of these are even now engaging the earnest attention of many of our best thinkers. Those presented when the government was formed, though numerous and perplexing, were generally solved wisely and well. There were in the Colony those who held that civil government contravened their personal liberty. Their confused ideas it was not easy to clarify, though the attempt was made once and again. Civil government, said John Clarke,* must not lay its hand of power on "the hidden part of man, to wit, his spirit, mind, and conscience;" "its end is the preservation of itself, the whole and every particular part, and person belonging thereunto, safe in their person, name, and estate, from him and them that would rise up visibly to oppress and wrong them in the same." And Roger Williams in one of his letters, † likens the state to a ship at sea having many hundred souls on board, "pagans and protestants, Jews and Turks." While the commander may not compel any one to come to the ship's prayers, he may and must enforce upon all justice and sobriety, and command help from all either in person or in purse for the common weal.

* *III News*; 4 Mass., *Hist. Coll.*, II., 5, 6.

† Backus, *History*, second edition, I., 237; *Nar. Club. Pub.*, VI., 278.

FURTHER REMARKS ON LIBERTY—THE IDEA AND ITS LIMITATIONS.

By their sober teaching and substantial government our fathers proved conclusively, that they held no wild and visionary notions concerning liberty. What they so earnestly contended for, and so resolutely sought in this new world, was exemption from civil liabilities on account of private opinions and acts of worship. They demanded that thought should be free, speculation free, and activity free, so far as the latter did not interfere with the rights and liberties of others ; in short, they demanded for all men the largest possible personal freedom. Theirs was not, however, be it remembered, a struggle for “free thought,” but for freedom of thought. While protesting against the ecclesiastical authority of the state, and the authority of the traditional teaching of the church, they “yet reposed implicitly on an outward authority revealed in the sacred books of Holy Scripture, and restricted the exercise of freedom within the limits prescribed by this authority.”

In later discussions the doctrine of liberty has often degenerated into something quite unlike that enunciated when this State was founded. We may further remark, therefore, that the liberty which we have inherited from our fathers, and which is the corner-stone and glory of our State, is not inconsistent with the absolute submission of the reason to authority, when that authority properly authenticates itself. In the late debates that have arisen concerning the meaning of the Vatican decrees, the Papists are right in saying that “there is an absolute necessity of some teaching power for man that can rise superior to the aberrations of human thought,” but altogether and fundamentally wrong when that power is supposed to be vested in the Pope, or in the church, or even in an ecumenical council, and not in the sacred Scriptures, the production of men who spoke and

wrote as the Spirit gave them utterance. This liberty is, indeed, far enough removed from that claimed by the modern rationalist who insists on investing the reason with supreme authority in matters of religion and subjecting to its tests the profoundest revelations of the Word, though he pretend to be a lineal descendant of Williams and Luther and Arnold of Brescia, of the long line of bold spirits who have been the defenders of freedom of thought. This being true, it certainly follows that the liberty of which we are speaking is consistent with positive beliefs, with the systematic statement of these beliefs, and with the carrying out of these beliefs into practical life.

Positive convictions respecting the utterances of the Divine Authority and unswerving fidelity to these convictions are in no way incompatible with this liberty. This does by no means require that one shall abide in doubt and uncertainty, be ever learning and never come to a knowledge of the truth ; that all questions shall be kept open, and none be considered closed and placed beyond dispute. While free in its search after truth, the mind is none the less free when, upon evidence offered, it settles down to a fixed belief. Definiteness of belief neither impairs one's own mental freedom, nor renders him intolerant of others' differences. A man with sharply defined views of truth is not thereby rendered either narrow or uncharitable, but may be distinguished even for breadth of thought and catholicity of spirit. Mr. Stuart Mill very justly considers the world under great obligations to earnest Christians for this inestimable boon. Liberty has a Christian descent, as history attests. Through Christianity, or rather through those who have apprehended the spiritual nature of the religion of Christ, has this blessing been transmitted to the world. Yet this is true, Mr. Mill explains, by a sort of happy inconsistency on their part.

"So natural to mankind," he says, * "is intolerance in whatever they really care about, that religious freedom has hardly anywhere been practically realized, except where religious indifference, which dislikes to have its peace disturbed by theological quarrels, has added its weight to the scales." Mr. Mill evidently studied Christianity as it is exhibited in state churches. It will not be denied that the fathers of this colony held truth tenaciously, with sharp and definite outlines, and with consequent positiveness, and yet it was liberty of thought and of speech of which they were the special champions.

Although the making of creed-statements, if for the purpose of governing the life, has sometimes been condemned even by good men, as opposed to the free spirit of the denomination, especially in this State, few surely will venture to assert that the formulating of truth is inimical to the right of private judgment. While resting belief simply and solely on the Bible, our fathers did not hesitate to make creed-statements, to draw up articles of faith, to put in systematic form the doctrines of Scripture. They recognized also "the importance of a true and proper science of theology," to be built up "out of the matter of revelation." Creed-statements are not inconsistent with the traditional doctrines of the State upon liberty of conscience. † Since there is in Christendom such a variety of beliefs, such contradictory ones forsooth, articles of faith are a necessity. Every church, indeed, has its creed, either written or unwritten,

* *Essay on Liberty*, p. 20, seq.

† As is sometimes affirmed. Some of the earliest fathers, as John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes, left confessions of their faith. Backus, *History*, I., 182-4, 206-9; and at a later period John Comer, transcribed into the *First Newport Church Records*. Confessions of faith have been intimately connected with the historical development of the Baptists. The Baptists of England issued, in 1643, an authorized statement of their belief; and another more elaborate one in 1677, which generally bears the date of 1689. Dr. Cutting says: "I think we were the earliest of the dissenting bodies of England in the issuing of confessions." *Historical Vindication*, pp. 85-106.

and all who seek admission are presumed to be in accordance with that creed, in harmony with the belief of the church.

When belief is thus translated into act, there is no infringement of liberty,—of any one's liberty. A church adopting certain articles as expressing its convictions on essential doctrines, and separating itself from those who do not subscribe to the same confession of faith, does thereby trench on no one's private rights, touch no one's inner life. Membership in a church is voluntary, never compulsory. The constitution of a church must not be confounded with that of a state. This remark would be superfluous, if men of intelligence even did not persist in likening the action of a church in withdrawing from doctrinal dissentients, to that of the Puritans in banishing Roger Williams from their jurisdiction. In the very act of contending for the broadest liberty of thought and of worship, our fathers claimed for themselves the right to separate from those whose opinions they deemed inimical to the truth, or subversive of scripture teaching. They strongly insisted on their right thus to withdraw. This was their liberty. The right to separate from the Establishment, to protest against its corruptions, was in England a principal issue involved in the long and sanguinary struggles of the seventeenth century. It is well to remind ourselves that this was the very end sought in the earnest conflicts of that period for liberty. For the sake of this right Puritans came to New England. For exercising the same right our fathers were driven to this State. Before his banishment Roger Williams had affirmed * that "he durst not officiate to an unseparated people." And John Clarke, arguing for a pure church, said† "that by preaching men were to be made disciples before they were to be

* *Letter to John Cotton, Nar. Club Pub., VI., 356.*

† *Ill News, 4 Mass. Hist. Coll., II., 14.*

baptized, and then taught to observe all things which Christ had commanded for the order of His house ; for they and they only that gladly received the word of salvation by Jesus Christ were baptized ; and they and all they were joined to the church, and continued in fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers."

CONTROVERSIES RESPECTING THE CHURCH—QUAKERISM, THE "SIX PRINCIPLES," DOCTRINES.

One of the questions which in that period convulsed English society and in large measure shaped English politics, pertained to the nature and functions of the Christian church. Similar discussions disturbed the peace of the colonies. Some of these discussions, indeed, first appeared here and afterward in the mother country. In our present historical survey we have to notice several ecclesiastical controversies, some of them continuing through many years, and bitter, perhaps, in their spirit, as was the character of the polemics of the age.

The earliest religious controversy in this State of which we have any account, indeed arising almost immediately after the settlement, involved two fundamental questions, namely, the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice, and the existence upon earth of a visible church with visible ordinances. There were those on the island who, as early as 1640, pushing still further the principles of the "Antinomians," went beyond the written word and claimed to be in possession of an inner life, of a revelation from the Spirit supplementary to that of the Bible.* They also maintained

* See in this connection a brief analysis of the tests of truth employed as ultimate, with an examination of the advantages and dangers arising when these tests—sensation, intuition, feeling—are respectively applied to religion as the standard of appeal, in Farrar's *Critical History of Free Thought*, p. 25, seq. "If the feelings be relied upon as the sole arbitors, especially if they be linked with the imagination instead of the intuition, they may conduct to mysticism and superstition by the very vividness of their perception of the supernatural." The mysticism of the Quakers of the seventeenth century is of this character." Ibid. p. 29. Cf. Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, II., 84.

"that there were no churches since those founded by the apostles and evangelists, nor could any be, nor any pastors ordained, nor seals administered but by such, and that the church was to want these all the time she continued in the wilderness, as yet she was." Others went so far as to teach * that "man has no power nor will in himself, but as he is acted by God ; and seeing that God filled all things, nothing could be or move but by him."

As these persons professed to be seeking more light than they had, including a fresh revelation from heaven, they were denominated *Seekers*. Roger Williams had the preceeding year, a few months after his baptism, himself become a Seeker.† There were many such earnest inquirers in England ‡ and the older colonies. After diligent search among the wrecks of that time for the true church they concluded that it was impossible to find it, and began to entertain the opinion that, since the church was lost in the general corruption, there must be a new beginning, with new apostles to reinstitute the ordinances and worship of the Lord's house. § The chain of succession had been broken. A few ventured even to deny that any external church or visible ordinances had been divinely furnished, and to teach that both the church and its ordinances are to be understood in a purely spiritual sense. And still others, under this cover, fell away from religion altogether. Two obvious truths were neglected by these men seeking for light. First, that they were to build churches after the model given them in the New Testament, that here is the sure light

* Winthrop, II., 38-41.; Backus, I., 97.

† Scott's Letter, in *George Fox's Answer to Williams*, 1677, p. 247; Backus, I., 89.

‡ Crosby, *Hist. Eng. Bapt.*, II., 294 seq.

§ The subject of succession—"Apostolic" or "Baptist"—troubled not a few who were finding their way into the light. "That the power of religious ministers is derived by an external succession from the apostles, through the churches of Rome and England" was, very naturally the belief of many of the Puritans. It was later the belief of such men as Drs. Stiles and Hopkins. Backus, II., 312, 368.

to guide them in the midst of the deepest darkness ; and, secondly, that any church observing the order herein indicated is in direct line of succession from the apostolic churches—that for a spiritual church, though organized and possessing rites, the true succession is a spiritual one.

This must be the class of men—these Seekers—Mr. Clarke has in mind when he bids men remember that “the spirit that does not exalt Christ cannot be the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit of promise ; and urges them to try the spirits, to bring them to the wholesome words of the holy apostles, prophets, and the Son of God ; and counsels that it be the Christian’s care to search the Scriptures, and THEREIN to wait for the power and glory of the Spirit of God.” He also charges the people to steer clear of both Scylla and Charybdis, of the opinion of those on the one hand who destroyd the purity and spirituality of the church by uniting it with the civil power, and by introducing into it unregenerate material by infant baptism ; and of the opinion of those on the other hand who denied that there were any visible churches. He would have them avoid both extremes ; “not turn to the left side in a visible way of worship, indeed, but such as was neither appointed by Christ, nor yet practiced by those who first trusted in Him ; nor to the right in no visible way of worship, or order at all, either pretending that the church is now in the wilderness, or that the time of its recovery is not yet, or else pretending that God is a Spirit, and will in spirit be worshipped, and not in this place or in that, in this way or that.” * Thus, while maintaining the spiritual constitution of the church, he adhered to its outward form, its organic structure, and put honor upon the Scriptures, teaching, with Chillingworth, that “the Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of protestants.”

* *Ill. News, 4 Mass. Hist. Coll., II., 19, 20.*

These Seekers, Mr. Arnold says in his history of Rhode Island,* "were afterwards merged in the Society of Friends," a denomination of Christians which took its rise about the middle of the seventeenth century. One of their earliest historians† gives a similar explanation of the origin of this Society in England; its members, he says, were there first called Seekers and afterwards Quakers, but they subsequently assumed the name of Friends. It was about the year 1648 that the celebrated George Fox began to publish in England his peculiar tenets. When he and his followers came to Rhode Island "they found their brethren already here." Mr. Callender observes‡ that "the opinions and circumstances people here gave them a very large harvest." Members of this society became numerous, and close of the first century, they were, we are most influential denomination in the State.§ It is proper to add that, from the memorable dispute had with them in 1672, it is abundantly evident Roger Williams never embraced the sentiments of the people. He continued to be a Seeker, to believe in the church, but he expected a new dispensation to supersede it. Though he never after leaving the Seekers united himself to them, he nevertheless maintained to the close of his life, that they were the truest representation of the divine original. We have two explicit documents of his, giving his belief on the constitution of the church, and on the form and subjects of baptism. When an old man, in 1676, he thus expresses himself : ||

* Vol. I. 151.

† William Sewel, *History of the people called Quakers*, p. 6.

‡ *Hist. Disc.*, p. 118.; Ross, *Hist. Disc.*, Newport, 1838, p. 131.

§ Dr. McSparran thus writes in 1752: "In Rhode Island no religion is established. Here a man may, with impunity, be of any society or none at all; but the Quakers are, for the most part, the people in power. As Quakerism broke out first in England in 1651, so in 1654, emissaries of that enthusiasm were dispatched to the West Indies; and no sooner did their preachers appear in Rhode Island, but they found many of the posterity of the first planters too well disposed for the reception of that pestilent heresy." *America Dissected*. Updike, *Narragansett Church*, p. 510.

|| George Fox digged out of his Burrowes, *Nar. Club Pub.*, V. 103.

"After all my search and examinations, and considerations, I do profess to believe that some come nearer to the first primitive churches, and the institutions and appointments of Christ Jesus than others ; as in many respects, so in that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock, or society, viz.: actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them and wrought that heavenly change in them." In a letter* bearing date 1649, he says : "At Seekonk a great many have lately concurred with Mr. John Clarke and our Providence men about the point of a new baptism and manner by dipping, and Mr. John Clarke hath been there lately, and Mr. Lucar, and hath dipped them. I believe their practice comes nearer to the first practice of our great Founder Christ Jesus, than other practices of religion do."

Before this controversy had subsided, another arose in the ranks of those holding to a visible church. It referred to the proper basis of a Christian church, to what principles entered into the foundation of a true church of Christ and are essential to its completeness. While some in the Colony were pushing their principles to the extreme of doing away with the visible, organized church, denying the obligations of baptism and the Lord's Supper, claiming that these have only a spiritual meaning, others were disposed to add to these ordinances another, the imposition of hands, as an indispensable prerequisite to church membership and a place at the memorial feast, citing as authority the words in Hebrews vi. 1, 2.

The opinion seems to have been first broached both at Providence and at Newport about the year 1652 ; but the discussion which followed did not produce a division in the churches until a few years later, in Providence in

§ To Gov. Winthrop, *Nar. Club Pub.*, VI. 188; 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* VI. 274.

1653-54, and in Newport in 1656.* Dr. Hague relates, on the authority of Mr. Comer, that William Vaughan, of Newport, having learned that a church had been formed at Providence which embraced this tenet and made it a term of communion, repaired thither to pass under the hands of the pastor, Rev. William Wickenden, and that on his return he and others united in forming a similar body at Newport.† This controversy thus rent asunder the Baptist brotherhood of the State. The two parties were rigidly separated from each other; those holding to the necessity of laying hands upon all church members refused to fellowship such as denied this to be an ordinance of Christ.‡

Five years after he had left the Providence church Roger Williams published his *Bloody Tenent*, in which he refers to the classic passage in Hebrews as enunciating the foundation principles of an organized Christian church. It has indeed been affirmed that "he was the first in this country, if not in Europe, of those who have since been Six Principle Baptists, who hold the imposition of hands to be as essential as baptism for any church fellowship."§ His conclusion doubtless influenced many in the Colony. When he himself first embraced it, does not appear. While holding this one article, in common with the Six Principle Baptists, in other points quite as essential he differed from them. In belief, we think he came nearer to the Baptists of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. With all his apparent unsettledness in religious matters, it deserves to be men-

* "Mr. Samuel Hubbard informs us," says Backus, "that in 1652 the practice was adopted first at Providence and then at Newport." *History*, II. 4. Hubbard was a contemporary of Williams and Clarke, of Wickenden and Vaughan, narrating what took place in his own lifetime. Callender remarks further: "About the year 1653 or '54 there was a division in the Baptist church at Providence." "In 1652 some of the brethren at Newport embraced the opinion of laying on of hands; in 1654 or '56 some withdrew and formed themselves into a church." *Hist. Disc.* pp. 114, 118.

† *Hist. Dist.* p. 97.

‡ Knight, *History Six Principle Baptists*, p. 100.

§ *Nar. Club Pub.*, IV. 21; Cf. III. 65.

tioned that he seems never to have been unsettled in his doctrinal views. He was himself a Calvinist, and characterized the opposite system as "that Arminian Popish doctrine of Freewill."* According to their historian, Knight, the Six Principle Baptists of Rhode Island were emphatically Arminian in doctrine. Such, says Callender,† became the church in Providence that "was distinguished by holding laying on of hands necessary to all baptized persons." And the new church in Newport was a protest against Calvinism as well as against indifference in regard to the laying on of hands.‡

The division in Rhode Island was a counterpart of that which took place in England, separating the Baptists into two bodies, the Particular and the General. Crosby, in his history of the English Baptists § observes, "that there have been two parties of the Baptists in England ever since the beginning of the Reformation; those who followed the Calvinistic scheme of doctrines, and from the principal point therein—Personal Election, have been termed Particular Baptists; and those who have professed the Arminian or remonstrant tenets, and have also from the chief of these doctrines—universal redemption, been called General Baptists." The imposition of hands was practiced somewhat by both bodies, but not universally by either, though more extensively by the latter than by the former. In this country the Particular Baptists of Pennsylvania held originally to the practice, and the General (or, as they are now more commonly called, the Six Principle) Baptists of Rhode Island, held the same very rigidly. We think there is a deeper significance in these doctrinal differences than at first appears.

* *Nar. Club Pub.*, III. 258.

† *Hist. Disc.* p. 115. Benedict, *History*, 1813, I. 486, 487.

‡ "These seceders objected against the old body, *First*—Her use of psalmody. *Second*—Undue restraint upon the liberty of prophesying, as they called it. *Third*—Particular redemption. *Fourth*—Her holding the laying on of hands as a matter of indifference. This last article is supposed to have been the principal cause of the separation." Benedict, I. 500.

§ Vol. I. 173; Neal, *History of the Puritans*, II. 110-113.

Among the Particular Baptists of the State still another controversy arose, less extensive in its immediate influence. It was in regard to the Christian Sabbath. There were those who urged that in the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh, there was a departure from Scripture teaching. The discussion began in 1665, but did not issue in a separate organization until 1671.* As one result of the agitation, two Sabbatarian churches were formed, one at Newport and another in the southwestern part of the State, at Westerly.†

As has been already intimated, the earliest Baptists of the State were strong Calvinists, holding "strictly to the doctrines of sovereign grace."‡ But later writers speak of a decadence of these views, of doctrinal darkness in some of the churches, of the growth of Arminianism. The falling off of the Six Principle churches was in part on doctrinal grounds, they embracing the tenets of the General Baptists. And in the other churches there may have been a modification of the doctrines formerly held, or rather an expansion and fuller explication of them. They did not, it would seem, forsake the "doctrines of grace," but learned that they could with consistency maintain the general provisions of the gospel, while insisting as strongly as ever on their particular application. For, in the language of Dr. Archibald Alexander, "the cardinal point of difference between Calvinists and Arminians is, whether the reason

**First Newport Church records*; Backus, I. 325; Arnold, II. 36.

† Thus early, shortly after the settlement of the State, four denominations of Christians had appeared, three of which took their origin in this period, in the very controversies we have noticed. Of the Friends it has been said that as "a body of Christians it took its rise in England about the middle of the seventeenth century." Of the Sabbatarians: "There were likely two congregations of the Sabbatarians in London; one among the General Baptists, meeting in Mill Yard, the trust-deeds of which date as far back as 1678; the other the Particular Baptists, in Cripplegate." *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. The earliest Episcopal church within the Colony was organized in 1699; and the first Congregational in 1720. Other denominations came later. A church was gathered in 1783 on an independent basis, which subsequently united with the Freewill Baptists, the first of this name in the Colony. The first church of this denomination in North America was formed only three years earlier, in 1780, nearly a century and a half after the settlement of the State. *Ency. Relig. Knowl.*

‡ Backus, II. 2.

why one man is saved and another not, is owing to the grace of God, or to the free will of man." Judged by this standard we think there was very little Arminianism in the Baptist churches of New England outside of the Six Principle body for the first hundred years. Dr. Neale well says :* "This charge from the lips of those in sympathy with Dr. Gill requires considerable abatement." At a somewhat later period there were individual cases of doctrinal defection, a few persons becoming imbued even with Socinianism. Spiritual life was, however, very feeble, the churches partaking of the general apathy that rested like a pall upon all the New England colonies. The general deadness arrested the attention of the more devout and led them to plead in special prayer for a revival of religion. The coming to these shores of that earnest and singularly gifted man, George Whitfield, in 1740, was followed by one of the most wonderful awakenings in the history of the church. All New England felt the stimulating effect. One of its marked features was the multiplying of Baptist churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut † and the quickening of religious life in Rhode Island. These "Separatists," or "New Lights," as those Baptists were called who had come out from the "standing order," visited by invitation the "old Baptists" of the Narragansett country with most gratifying results. Spiritual life and

* *Hist. Disc.*, Boston, 1865, p. 25.

† For an interesting account of this multiplication of Baptist churches, see *Historical Discourse* by David Weston, Middleborough, 1868, entitled *The Baptist Movement of a Hundred Years Ago, and its Vindication*. The author calls attention to the fact that a similar phenomenon has been often witnessed in the history of the church. He says, "Trace back the record of church history to the early centuries, and it will be invariably found that every time of quickening and reformation has produced Baptists." "The Great Reformation of the sixteenth century could never have occurred if it had not been heralded by Baptists." Pp. 15, 16.

"At this time (1549) there were many Anabaptists in several parts of England. They were generally Germans, whom the revolutions there had forced to change their seats. Upon Luther's first preaching in Germany there arose many, who building on some of his principles, carried things much further than he did. The chief foundation he laid was, that the Scripture was the only rule of Christians." Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, 4th ed., London, 1715, pt. II. bk. I. Vol. II. 105. Luther was indeed strenuously opposed on the very ground that his principles, if consistently followed, would conduct him to the position maintained by the Anabaptists.

activity appeared. Churches that had affiliated with the Six Principle Baptists were dissolving this connection. Changes elsewhere were also taking place. The Providence church was turning toward the doctrinal views of the first settlers of the Colony and was at the same time relaxing its former strictness in regard to the laying on of hands. As early as 1730, Governor Jenckes, a member of this church, wrote to his pastor concurring in the opinion that the neglect of this rite "should be no bar to communion with those who have been rightly baptized."* At the beginning of President Manning's ministry, it was by a vote of the church set aside as a term of communion,† not, however, as an ordinance of Christ for the sake of union with other Christians, but because it had ceased to be regarded as such an ordinance; this conclusion reached, the custom fell into desuetude. And in Newport, immediately after the death of the pastor, Rev. Gardner Thurston, which occurred in 1802, the Second church, having been prepared for it during the latter part of his ministry, made a change in its ecclesiastical relations. This church, says Mr. Knight in his history,‡ who wrote as an eye-witness, "appear to have rather swerved from their ancient faith and practice." The church had reached the doctrinal position of the regular Baptists. That remarkable revival of living

"The Rev. Archbishop Whitgift, and the learned Hooker, men of great judgment and famous in their time, did long since foresee, and accordingly declared their fear that if ever Puritanism should prevail among us, it would soon draw in Anabaptism after it. At this Cartwright and others, the advocates for the Disciplinarian interest in those days, seemed to take great offence. But these good men judged right. They only considered, as prudent men, that Anabaptism had its rise from the same principles the Puritans held, and its growth, from the same courses they took; together with the natural tendency of their principles and practices thitherward; especially that one principle, as it was by them understood, that the Scripture was *adequata agendorum regula*, so as nothing might be lawfully done without express warrant either from some command or example therein contained. The clue thereof, if followed on as far as it would lead, would certainly in time carry them as far as the Anabaptists were then gone." Bishop Sanderson, *Sermons*, London, 1681, preface §XXIII.

* Guild, *Manning and Brown University*, p. 152.

† Hague, p. 107; Backus, II. 493.

‡ Page 262. And Backus says, "The doctrines of grace gradually gained ground in this church." *History*, II. 500.

piety which swept with blessed influences over the New England states and, extending beyond them, aroused the slumbering churches, was indeed a revival also of Calvinism in the churches, the Calvinism of Andrew Fuller, however, rather than that of John Gill. The doctrines of grace, which had become sadly obscured among the Congregationalists of Massachusetts and the General Baptists of Rhode Island, were made to stand forth in their beauty and power during the great Awakening. The prevalent type of piety was considerably modified. Religious life became less introspective and more outward, more aggressive, more missionary. A new era was about to dawn, an era of growth and rapid multiplication. With these changes, new wants were developed; and there was a feeling after fellowship, sympathy, coöperation,—toward a completer recognition of the mutual relation of churches.

THE ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES—ORGANIC UNITY.

We now reach the period when the oldest of our New England associations was formed, the year 1767. For the next fifty years and more, the history of this Association is well nigh the history of the denomination in the State. The principle was not a new one, as sometimes represented. The Philadelphia Association had already been sixty years in existence, having been organized in 1707. Other associations had been formed in the more Southern States.* Nor were the New England churches wholly unacquainted with such voluntary bodies. The Six Principle churches had, according to Knight, since “about the close of the sixteenth (meaning the seventeenth”) century, united in a yearly meeting composed of elders, messengers,” &c.† And the Calvinistic churches

* There were already five associations at the South. “The Ketochnon Association was formed in 1766, and was the fifth association of the Calvinistic Baptists in America. The Philadelphia, the Charleston, Sandy Creek and Kehukee Associations were formed before it.” Benedict, *History*, II. 34.

† *History*, p. 322. Caldwell, *Centennial Discourse*, Warren Assoc., 1867, p. 29.

had early contemplated the formation of a similar body, as appears from the following record made in 1734:*

"Had some discourse about coming into an association with the churches of our communion, to which no one made any objection or showed any reluctance, but all that spoke seemed to approve the scheme and to desire to guard against the disorders that have attended some General Meetings." Besides the considerations influential in 1734, many others were potent in 1767. It was a transition period with some churches and more individuals. Baptist churches had multiplied in Massachusetts, and the Six Principle yearly meeting had greatly declined, if it had not already ceased to exist. The churches that were essentially one in doctrine and practice, demanded some recognized bond of union, some expression of their common life. Work was, moreover, thrust upon them which could be effectually done only by combination. Baptists in the neighboring states needed moral support and protection against unjust laws. And the infant college required the fostering care of the Baptists of this section, as well as of Pennsylvania and the South.

Thus we discover preparations for the Association formed at Warren. But the task of bringing together and unifying the different elements of which it was to be composed, was slowly accomplished. The proposed association was to embrace the few original Calvinistic churches, such Six Principle churches as had become Calvinistic in doctrine and had ceased to regard the imposition of hands as an ordinance of Christ, and the Baptist churches that had arisen out of the Separatist movement, especially in Massachusetts. These several classes of churches, though virtually one in faith and practice, were evidently somewhat afraid of each other, and naturally shy of committing themselves to an enter-

* *First Newport Church records.*

prise that might endanger the truth, or abridge their liberties. And, too, not a few Baptists had suffered so much from synods, and councils, and clerical associations in Massachusetts and Connecticut, that for this reason also they moved in the matter with extreme caution.* Similar difficulties were encountered in Virginia when the Regulars and Separates of that State were merged into one body on the basis of a common confession.† In illustrating this principle—the association of churches—from the Warren Association, we shall briefly pass under review its basis of union, the powers it claimed, and the purpose it contemplated.

The first step taken in organizing the Association was to form *a basis of union*. Its projectors thought, and thought wisely, that for the union to be pleasant and effective, or even possible for the ends sought, all the churches coming into the body must stand upon the same platform; have substantially the same belief and agree in church order; in other words, they must have a common understanding of the teachings of the Word of God, both as to what it is to be a Christian, and what constitutes a church. As it drew its inspiration from Philadelphia, so the Association organized after the model Philadelphia had shown. It rested upon the same basis. The Philadelphia Association had in 1746 declared that "churches ought to unite in faith and practice, and to have and maintain communion together, in order to associate regularly, because the latter is founded upon and arises from the former." That Association was composed of churches Calvinistic in doctrine, Congregational in government, and restricted in fellowship. A like body was contemplated by the Warren church, of which President Manning was then the pastor, when it voted‡ that "an association be

* Backus, II. 408.

† Benedict, II. 61; Cutting, *Hist. Wind.*, p. 97.

‡ Spalding, *Hist. Disc.*, Warren church, 1864, p. 18.

entered into with sundry churches of the same faith and order." When the appointed delegates from the churches came together, on the eighth of September, 1767, "the issue of the meeting was, adopting the sentiments and platform of the Western (Philadelphia) Association, and thereon forming themselves into a like body to be known as the Warren Association." Two years later the platform was slightly modified; and then, the same year, 1769, it was printed with a prefatory note containing the declaration given above, that on the platform of the Western Association the delegates at Warren formed themselves into a like body.* The Philadelphia Association recognized the likeness, addressing its first letter "to the elders and messengers of the several Baptist churches of the same faith and order, to meet in association at Warren." The platform further states the manner and conditions of admission into the body as follows : "Churches are to be received into this Association by petitions setting forth their desire to be admitted, their faith, order, and willingness to be conformable to the rules of the associated body." Thus it is evident that the basis of union provides for a homogeneous body, a body composed of churches in substantial agreement, seeing eye to eye, having the same belief as to the way of salvation and the method of church building.

We proceed to inquire *what powers* were claimed and exercised by the Association? The Association was not a synod, nor a presbytery, nor a classis, nor in any sense a court of judicature, and could not exercise the powers of such bodies. It had nothing whatever to do with churches not belonging to it, and nothing at all with the internal affairs of churches connected with it. It sacredly abstained from laying its hands upon the independence of the individual churches. It was emphatic in "dis-

*This was printed on a separate sheet; a copy of which is bound up with a complete list of the minutes of the Association, in the library of Brown University. This platform appears entire in Guild's *Manning*, 78-80; Backus, II. 413.

claiming superiority, jurisdiction, coercive right, and infallibility," assuming to be "no other than an advisory council." It was a voluntary body, that is, a body which the different members, the individual churches, had voluntarily entered, and it claimed the powers—no more, no less—of other like bodies, voluntary associations. As such it claimed the right to frame its own constitution, to make its own by-laws, to determine the conditions of membership, to enforce its own rules, and to preserve its own integrity; its rules and regulations, however, to be always conformable to Scripture. Like the churches of which it was composed, it was an independent body under Christ. It was under no obligation to receive a church because it applied for admission, nor to retain one when admitted if it depart from its faith and violate the original compact. In dissolving its connection with a constituent, its course was determined by no outside body called to sit in judgment upon its acts. It asked permission of no one to strike a church from its roll of members.

These statements are confirmed by the history of the Association. It has from the beginning examined all applicants by a committee "on the admission of new churches." This examination, provided for in the original basis of union, and observed through all the subsequent years, implies a standard, and the right both to reject applicants not conforming to it, and to cut off any member of the body departing therefrom. From the minutes of the Association, we learn that it has during its history dropped several churches, because they failed to comply with the conditions of admission. Mr. Backus, who was the first clerk of the Warren Association, and prominent during all its earlier years, having indeed much to do in shaping its policy, and who knows therefore whereof he affirms, says of this and similar bodies, "that they refuse to hear and judge of any personal controversy in any of their churches, or to intermeddle

with the affairs of any church which hath not freely joined with them." He adds in regard to their own churches: "If any church refuse to report its condition annually to the association, or if the church departs from her former faith and order, she is left out of the association." * These quotations are explicit and require no comments. The right to protect itself, to excind unworthy members, was both claimed and exercised. Churches were sometimes, indeed, even while still members, forbidden by vote from taking seats in the body, when cause was shown.† Nor was there ever any complaint that church independency was thereby infringed.

The powers claimed will still further appear if we consider *the purpose* for which the Association was organized. This was three-fold. First, to give expression to an already existing fact, the essential oneness of their churches, to make visible the truth of this agreement in faith and practice and their consequent fellowship. Although their local churches were not parts of an organized whole, but were independent bodies, each complete in itself, yet they were not Ishmaelitish, acknowledging no peculiar relationship and obligation, but were essentially one in the truth. And they would by means of association form a bond in recognition of the union, one that should at the same time draw them closer together for mutual protection and aggressive work.

A second purpose of the Association was to preserve the unity and doctrinal purity of the churches; to maintain the New Testament faith and order, to defend the integrity of the truth, and to build churches after the model the apostles furnished. This purpose was incorporated into the platform, wherein it is declared that "some of the uses of it (the Association) are union and commun-

* Backus, II. 413. See also a discussion of *The Mutual Relation of Baptist Churches*, by Rev. W. H. H. Marsh, *Baptist Quarterly*, October, 1874.

† Minutes for 1788.

ion among themselves; maintaining more effectually the faith delivered to the saints, having advice in cases of doubt, and help in distress, being more able to promote the good of the cause." In the circular letter of 1768, the writer * expressed joy that "so many churches were willing to promote union and fellowship, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." The same intent appears in the constitutional provisions for the admission of churches and in the uniform practice of the Association through its entire history, namely, to examine all applicants as to "their faith and order." Even in the dismission of churches this aim was made manifest. For instance, in 1808 it was voted that if certain churches "from their local situation should find it more convenient to join other associations of the same faith and order, they are at liberty so to do; only they give us suitable notice of their proceedings." The churches were reminded of their duties to the Association, which insisted upon its rights. On one occasion † it dismissed a church, which had somewhat unceremoniously severed itself from the body, with this gentle rebuke, "though asking our previous advice might have been more expedient."

The doctrinal views of the Association, in the first instance declared to be set forth in the Confession of 1689 as adopted by the Philadelphia Association, were often and emphatically expressed, especially during the early history of the body. Queries both doctrinal and practical were frequently submitted and replies given; and, if space permitted, it would be interesting and instructive to reproduce some of these questions and answers.‡

* Dr. Stillman.

† In 1783.

‡ For example, in 1782, "The church at Harwich having requested advice as to the best mode of proceeding in case any church should deviate from the faith and order of the gospel as held by these churches, Voted: We are of opinion that in such case the neighboring churches ought to inform the deviating church of their uneasiness, and desire a candid hearing; if this is denied, or, if it be granted, and satisfaction is not obtained, they should withdraw fellowship from said church, and give information at the Association, who have a right to drop such church from this body." See also minutes for 1793, 1799, 1802, 1803, 1809, 1820.

That the Association jealously guarded against the approaches of error, and sought to conserve the doctrinal purity of the churches is abundantly evident.

The following item is from the minutes of 1784 : "As it is a time of the prevalence of error of every kind, and of the apostacy of many from the faith of the gospel, it is recommended to the churches, that they express in their annual letters to the Association, their particular adherence to the doctrines of grace."

The carefulness evinced in regard to the character of its own members was extended also to that of its affiliated bodies. A perusal of the minutes of the Association shows that its procedure was precisely the same with bodies seeking correspondence as with churches applying for membership. The faith and order required in the one case were required also in the other. The same tests of fellowship were applied to both. Provision was made at the very outset for "a connection to be formed and maintained between this Association and that of Philadelphia, by annual letter and messengers from us to them and from them to us." This was the beginning of a wide correspondence with similar bodies organized in different sections of the country. Whenever a kindred organization expressed a desire to open such correspondence, inquiry was invariably made into the belief and practice of the applicant, and if these were satisfactory, the request was granted and it was taken "into union and fellowship." We will cite two instances by way of illustrating the method of the Association when such applications were made. An association in New Hampshire was represented in the session of 1784, and gave, the records say, "a clear and satisfactory account of their faith and order," and "they were received into brotherly connection with us." Again in 1801, the Leyden Association appeared by its representatives, "to open" in the language of the original minutes, "a correspondence with us ; after obtaining satisfaction respect-

ing their faith and order, voted to receive them into our connection." The following are some of the oft-recurring phrases used when associations were admitted to correspondence :—"received into brotherly connection with us,"—"into union with us,"—"into fellowship and connection with us." A single exception confirms the rule. The Groton Conference, though composed of churches practising mixed communion, was, in 1798, taken into correspondence ; but the departure from the phraseology used on similar occasions, is significant. The records say that upon the reading of the letter, it was "Voted to send messengers to the Groton Conference agreeably to their request, hoping it may be a means of promoting Christian candor and mutual advantage." There must have been something in the condition of these churches to encourage the expectation that this course would promote the cause of truth and lead to cordial fellowship. It is a matter of history that these churches subsequently embraced restricted communion views.*

The third purpose of the Association was to stimulate the churches and combine them for more effective aggressive work. What could not be done or even attempted by any single church, might be accomplished by the

* Many familiar only with the present practice of the Association, may, after reading the preceding pages, inquire how the character of the Association's correspondence has been so radically changed. For a period of eighty-one years, until 1848, it maintained its correspondence as originally established, with bodies of "the same faith and order." In 1849, without giving any reason so far as the records show, it omitted to appoint its customary delegates, and never resumed the custom ; but the annual "Committee on Minutes of Corresponding Bodies," was continued.

At the session of 1858, this Committee on Correspondence reported that no minutes had been received, and took the liberty through the Moderator to introduce the President and Clerk of the Freewill Baptist Conference of Rhode Island. After addressed by these brethren, it was "Voted, that three delegates be appointed to attend the annual meeting of the Rhode Island Conference of Freewill Baptists at Olneyville, next June." Delegates were also appointed to meet with the Six Principle Baptists, and, at a subsequent stage of the same meeting, to the Seventh Day Baptists. This is the first time in the course of the Association's history that such appointments were made. The next year delegates were again sent; and the year following, 1860, a committee "was appointed to nominate delegates to corresponding bodies." Thus, the second year after the innovation was made, these several bodies were designated "corresponding bodies," the term being evidently used in an entirely new sense. In 1862 the Congregationalists were included in the number of corresponding bodies, and a little later the Methodists.

churches in organized combination. Many of the churches in Massachusetts, suffering from the ecclesiastical laws of the State, needed such assistance as could be rendered only by the churches acting in concert. Thus combining, they would "be more able to promote the good of the cause," and "become more important in the eye of civil powers." The Association made itself felt by the General Court at Boston, and in connection with the similar bodies by the Continental Congress. To obtain relief for distressed brethren was one of the first duties with which it charged itself. For ten years Isaac Backus continued most faithfully to serve the Association as its agent, to secure for his brethren exemption from civil liabilities for their religious opinions, and, if possible, the repeal of all odious laws against the "sectaries." These labors in behalf of religious liberty, which were ultimately crowned with signal success, form an honorable chapter in Baptist history.*

While making their heroic efforts for brethren harassed and oppressed with cruel burdens, and nobly seeking the dissemination of more liberal ideas and broader principles, the men who projected the Association were also diligently strengthening the foundations of the college that was to become the pride of the State and a source of power to the denomination. The sentiments entertained by the founders of the State concerning the value and importance of education are most honorable to them, and their endeavors to promote it worthy of all praise.

*For a full account of these struggles and triumphs, see Dr. Hovey's *Life and Times of Isaac Backus*; a book that should be carefully read, especially by every Baptist. Both at the settlement of the colonies and at the period of the Revolution, Baptists were permitted to bear a conspicuous part in securing liberty to the American people. And it is an interesting fact that the Baptist church served as a model for the national government. "There was a small Baptist church, which held its monthly meetings for business at a short distance from Mr. Jefferson's house, eight or ten years before the American Revolution. Mr. Jefferson attended these meetings for several months in succession. The pastor on one occasion asked him how he was pleased with the church government? Mr. Jefferson replied that it struck him with great force, and had interested him much; *that he considered it the only form of true democracy then existing in the world*, and had concluded that it would be the best plan of government for the American colonies. *Curtis, Progress of Baptist Principles*, p. 356.

Some of the original planters were themselves men of considerable culture. A few Baptists, of a later period, though at a personal sacrifice, availed themselves of provisions secured at Harvard especially for Baptist students through the munificence of Mr. Thomas Hollis, of London. While an encouraging number of generous youths were reaching toward the largest possible attainments in knowledge, a movement was very early made in this State for the education and general enlightenment of the many,—of all the young. By a vote of the town of Newport, August 20, 1640,* Mr. Robert Lenthall “was called to keep a public school for the learning of youth.” And an appropriation was made for his support, so that all, even the poorest, children might avail themselves of its advantages. It is claimed, and perhaps the claim is not ill-founded, that Rhode Island may boast of having had the first free school in America;† and a Baptist had the honor of being the first public school teacher.‡

As to the question of an educated ministry, our fathers never entertained the opinion that none but thoroughly trained men were fit to be inducted into the sacred office; much less did they commit the fatal mistake of substituting culture for piety in their spiritual guides. With them the teaching of the schools was no compensation for the teaching of the Spirit. They preferred indeed the “lowly preaching” of the godly to the polished discourses of the unregenerate. While strongly pro-

* *Newport Town Records*; Callendar, p. 116; Arnold, I. 145.

† The writer is indebted to the Hon. Wm. P. Sheffield, of Newport, for calling his attention to the fact that this movement for public schools antedated similar action by any other colony. Although Harvard College was founded in 1638, to provide a learned ministry for the churches, public schools, controlled and maintained by the government for the public good, were not attempted by the Massachusetts Colony until 1647, *Mass. Col. Rec.*, II. 203, nor by the Plymouth colony until 1770, *Ply. Col. Rec.*, V., 107; see also Baylies' *Memoirs of Ply. Col.*, Vol. I. pt. I., 241; pt. II., 67, 93. Yet Gov. Bradford early conceived the idea of giving instruction to the young of his Colony, but encountered insuperable difficulties, *Hist. Ply. Plantation*; 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, III. 161; Cf. Bacon's *Genesis of the New Eng. Churches*, p. 397.

‡ Winthrop, I. 287, 288; Hubbard, 2 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, V. 275; Backus, I. 97; Caldwell, *Hist. Disc.*, p. 27. Lenthall was admitted a freeman at Newport in 1640, *R. I. Col. Rec.*, I., 104.

testing against a prevailing evil of the times, admitting into the pulpit ungodly men because they had been taught in the schools with a view to the clerical profession,—against the pernicious custom of making education instead of piety, the indispensable qualification for the ministry, they nevertheless believed—the leaders at any rate—that genuine piety was none the worse for being conjoined with true culture, that a godly ministry would be all the more efficient for being disciplined and taught. At the earliest practicable moment a Baptist college, or, more properly, a college to be under Baptist control, was established at Providence, where Baptist youth might have equal advantages with other students,—"wherein education might be promoted, and superior learning obtained, free of any sectarian religious tests."* This stands seventh in the list of American colleges.† First proposed by the Baptists of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it received during its earlier years generous contributions from the South as well as from the churches of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.‡

In connection with the Association, other enterprises were successively inaugurated. The principle of combination was applied to missionary projects, to the assistance of young men preparing for the ministry, to the evangelization of the uncultivated portions of the State, to the carrying of the gospel to the heathen. But we cannot enlarge upon these points; it must suffice merely to state that the principle of association has been variously applied. One item, however, from the minutes of the Association for 1822 may be of interest. "Read the articles adopted by the South Carolina State Baptist Convention; whereupon Resolved, that this Association cheerfully accord with the principles adopted by that

* Backus, II. 137.

† Those preceding it were founded in the following order: Harvard (Cong.), 1638; William and Mary (Epis.), 1692; Yale (Cong.), 1701; Princeton (Presb.), 1746; University of Pennsylvania (Epis.), 1753; Columbia (Epis.), 1784.

‡ *Warren Assoc. Minutes*, 1774; Backus, II. 494.

body, and that we cordially unite with our brethren in the formation of a similar institution." Three years later the Missionary Convention was formed whose Jubilee we to-day celebrate.

Having overcome their first fears, our fathers learned to prize the principle of association. They expressed it as their conviction in 1809 that great good resulted "from the union of our churches into associations, and the reciprocal communications of associations with each other. The benefits of these correspondencies have been already experienced in a pleasing and profitable degree, and we conceive they may be more extensively experienced by a more full and mature cultivation of the plan." Indeed, the advantages thence arising were so thoroughly appreciated, and the principle was believed to be so accordant with Scripture teaching, that many would carry the principle still further and bring into a kind of organic union the Baptist brotherhood of the United States. The idea was more than suggested in the first letter of the Philadelphia Association :* "A long course of experience and observation, "they say," has taught us to have the highest sense of the advantages which accrue from association; nor, indeed, does the nature of the thing speak any other language. For, as particular member are collected together and united in one body, which we call a particular church, to answer those ends and purposes which could not be accomplished by any single member, so a collection and union into one associational body may easily be conceived capable of answering those still greater purposes which any particular church could not be equal to. And, by the same reason, a union of associations will still increase the body in weight and strength, and make it good that a threefold cord of strength is not easily broken." Several unsuccessful attempts were made to realize this idea of organic unity. In 1828 the Warren Association

* Contained in Guild's *Manning*, pp. 76, 77.

concurred in the opinion "That the time has arrived when we should have some regularly constituted bond or centre of union toward which, as a denomination, we might look." It was recommended that "the Baptist General Convention for Missionary Purposes take into consideration the propriety of forming an American Baptist Convention, to assemble triennially in a central part of the United States." These attempts, though perhaps impracticable, show conclusively that, so far from fearing the centralizing influence of associations, lest they should undermine the independence of the churches, many among the fathers were disposed to make the associations serve a still further purpose—to bind the denomination into an organized whole, or rather, to give expression to the existing fact of its essential oneness and homogeneity.*

We have thus passed under review some of the distinctive principles of the Baptists, imperfectly it must be confessed, but with sufficient fullness, it is hoped, to leave no doubt as to the historical attitude of the denomination in the State. The churches did not push their ideas of liberty to the confines of license, nor their notions of church independence to the extreme of isolation. The fathers believed that the churches, though independent, should associate themselves together, but that, while free to manage their own internal affairs, they had no right to modify their faith and practice and still claim to remain in associational connection. There is a definite body of

* These efforts for organic unity furnish an interesting study. The attempt to realize the idea was made by a General Committee, *Minutes* for 1791 and 1793; also by a General Association, or Convention. Possibly we have not made enough of our associations. Perhaps the principle of church independency has been lifted so high as quite to overshadow, if not entirely to conceal, another equally important principle, namely, the fellowship of the churches and their mutual relation. "The two foci of our ellipse are, on the one side, the independence of the local church and, on the other, the mutual friendship and helpful co-working of all local churches." Dexter, *Congregationalism*, p. 299. This early movement toward organic unity may profitably be compared with that recently made by our German brethren, which has resulted in the Baptist "Bund." Compare also the movement made for the unification of the Presbyterians under the lead of Dr. McCosh.

principles which our churches have held with almost uniform consistency from the very beginning. Oneness of doctrine and discipline has been a condition of denominational fellowship.

If we would trace our principles in their wide-spread growth and to their remoter influences, we must pass beyond our own communion into other religious societies, among Christians of other names. For many of the principles for which our fathers were contending a century, and even a half-century ago, and for holding which they suffered fines and imprisonments, are now the accepted faith of Christendom. They have become the common possession of the religious world—have entered into the thinking of the age. They would no more be questioned to-day than the movements of the earth around the sun, or the constant force of gravitation. And, but for the testimony of history, it would be difficult to believe that they were ever subjects of bitter controversy and their adherents cruelly persecuted.

Other principles, however, scarcely less important, and intimately related to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, are still in litigation. But, even in regard to these, a change of front is presented. The old issues are indeed dead, but new ones are constantly arising. The conflicts of the church are not all past. She is even now engaged in a triangular warfare. There are, on the one hand, tendencies toward laxity of doctrinal views,—to put a low estimate upon principles, to esteem all opinions equally good if held with equal honesty; our very liberty may degenerate into latitudinarianism. And there are, on the other hand, tendencies in the direction of the substitution of forms for simple faith in Christ,—to invest the ordinances of the church with sacramental efficacy. The baptismal controversy, for example, is not simply a question about the *form* of a rite, though this were not unimportant if it involves obedience to the head of the church; nor is it merely a

question respecting the proper *subjects* of the rite, though this embraces the very constitution of the church Christ established. The controversy touches still deeper than this, and concerns the *office* of the rite, what it does for him who submits to it, whether indeed it be a regenerating act, by which, for example, an unconscious child is made the fitter for heaven, or an unrepentant sinner is put in possession of the Holy Spirit,—involving thus the most essential doctrines of the gospel.* So long as this question remains an open one the work of the denomination will not be done, nor will it be at liberty to resign its trust.

For the further prosecution of its work the denomination may gather inspiration from its history. The wonderful growth of our principles in the past is a bright prophecy respecting their future progress, as regards both the numbers that shall embrace them and the clearness with which they shall be apprehended. But all true progress it is well to remind ourselves, is toward the Scriptures, toward a better understanding of them and a wider application of their truths. Science with all her boasted progress within the last half century—and it has been marvellous—has added not one law nor a single new force to the realm of nature; her progress has been toward a clearer apprehension and a fitter classification of the laws and forces that have been from the beginning. In like manner, progress in religious knowledge consists not in leaving the Bible, nor in supplementing its contents, but in obtaining constantly broader views and a stronger grasp of the everlasting truths inlaid in God's Book. Our principles must be constantly measured by the unerring teachings of Scripture. And thus by approaching this infallible standard, the different denominations of Christians will draw closer together, and may finally become one in the truth. The church of the

* See article on *Present State of the Baptismal Controversy*, by Dr. Hovey, *Baptist Quarterly*, April, 1875.

future will be a reproduction, enlarged and glorified, of the church of the first century ; it will appeal to the same ultimate standard, will embrace the same fundamental principles, and will be animated by the same spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion.

In studying the successes achieved by our fathers we are impressed with two facts, evidently influential with them and contributing to their success, facts which we shall do well to bear in mind.

First, that our principles are GOD'S TRUTHS. They are not uncertain speculations, mere human opinions, but truths divinely revealed, which we are therefore not at liberty to displace or modify, but to preserve in their integrity.

Secondly, that these truths have been committed to us IN TRUST. They are ours to defend and proclaim. The church is the Lord's whose government we are to administer in his name. The ordinances are the Lord's which we are to observe in his own prescribed way. The gospel is indeed itself a sacred trust committed to us to make known to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. May we prove the faithful heralds of salvation, worthy successors of men who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, but were willing to sacrifice their all to maintain the spirituality of the church, the integrity of the ordinances, and the personal nature of religion. Thus true to our doctrines and loyal to our King, we shall toil under his approving smiles and be permitted to hasten the triumphs of his kingdom in the earth.

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CHURCH POLITY;

OR

WHAT IS AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH?

A.

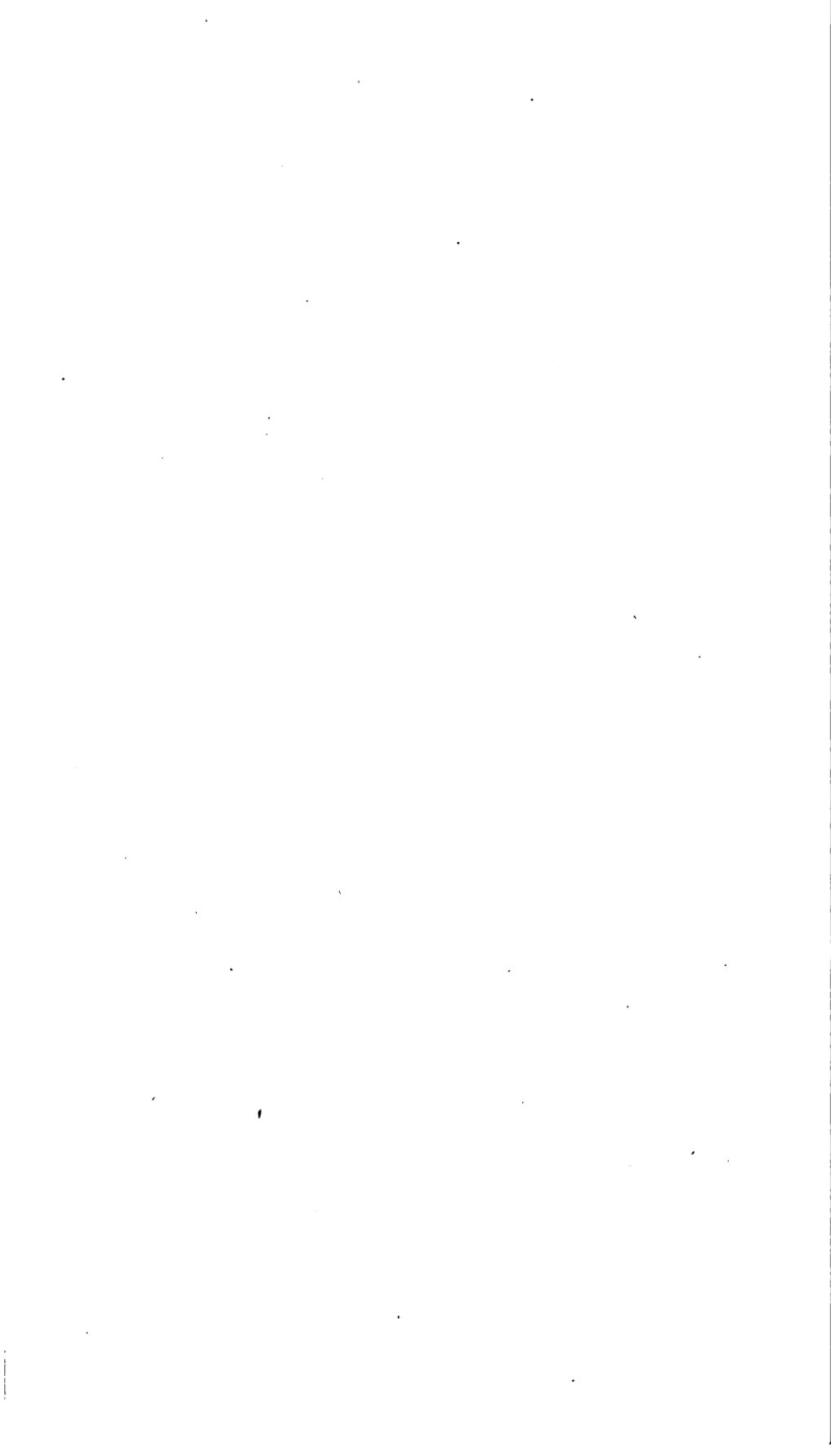
SEMI-CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED MAY 12, 1875,

Nathaniel Williams

BY REV. N. M. WILLIAMS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, WICKFORD.



CHURCH POLITY.

THE nineteenth century presents to the world the spectacle of church government in three forms. Borrowing from the vocabulary of the state, we may call them the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic or republican. The Episcopal form of government is monarchical, specimens of which may be seen in the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, the Church of England, and modified by union with an aristocratic element, in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Presbyterian form of government is aristocratic, softened by some infusion of the popular element. The popular form is represented in the Congregationalists, the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Baptists—most thoroughly by the Baptists. These existing forms of church government is what we mean by the church polity of the nineteenth century. New Testament church polity covers only the apostolic period, and by this the church polity of the nineteenth century, and of all the intervening centuries, must be tried. What I propose to do, then, is this: to break whatever connection may be alleged to exist between the church polity of the present and the church polity of the apostolic age, and thus avoid transferring to the first century what we see in the nineteenth.

To this method there ought to be no objection. The plan of working back from century to century till we arrive at

the first is almost sure to result badly, for it is well-nigh impossible to consider the subject of church polity in that way without taking back with us a burden of prejudice. Had the history of Christianity, in its true organic form, ever been written, the case would be different; but with all the advance which has been made in this branch of learning within the present century, Christianity, in its true organic form, is still waiting for a historian. History, both ecclesiastical and secular, has been colored by the influence of mental characteristics, education and creed. The historian has become advocate before finishing his first chapter. Whether history has drawn the portrait of William Penn correctly, turns—in the judgment of some—on the question whether his name was spelled with one *n* or two. That Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" bears marks of infidelity has been generally conceded, yet a Christian scholar of our own country has recently given to the public an elaborate argument on the other side. Historical criticism must be yet more searchingly applied before a still better history of Christianity, both spiritual and organic, can be written. The "Apostolic Constitutions," the "Epistles of Ignatius," the "History of Eusebius," and the "Decretals," are not the only witnesses which should be severely cross-questioned. In the meantime we ought to be grateful that we have the means of determining what was the church polity of apostolic times. We need no help even from the fathers, though, after answering the question in the way proposed, we are at liberty to inquire whether the fathers are in harmony with the New Testament.

I.

OF WHOM WAS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, OR A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, COMPOSED?

It is remarkable that the Greek word, *ekklesia*, represented in our English Scriptures by the word *church*,

was used by our Lord upon only two occasions. It was used when Peter, speaking for all the apostles, made his celebrated confession. "Thou art Peter," said Jesus, "and upon this rock I will build my church." The word was used in Athens to denote one of those assemblies of the people answering to the Roman *comitia*, in which "acts of the senate were canvassed, laws were proposed and approved or rejected, magistrates were appointed, war declared, and the like."* So far as I know, the Athenians never applied the singular to a group of assemblies. In speaking of more than one they would have used the plural. But in what sense does our Lord use the singular? Does he group all the local churches of the world together, and call them "my church," in the sense of one great organic body? But it would be conceded that at the most there was then only one local church on the earth; and the New Testament does not appear to authorize the statement that there was even one. Baptists have generally affirmed, that the first Christian church was formed in the beginning of the Lord's ministry, but if we rise above dogmatic considerations, and hold the question, as we certainly ought to hold it, as one of mere interpretation, we shall find it impossible to maintain the position. The germ of the first church may be seen in the calling of Andrew and John, and that germ was continually unfolding through the Saviour's ministry, but the full blossom did not appear till the sun burst forth with Pentecostal heat. While the word *ekklēsia* (church) occurs only twice in Matthew, it does not occur even once in either of the other gospels. It would have been contrary to fact to say: "On this rock I will build my churches, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them;" for many true churches become extinct. If it be affirmed that all true believers, hundreds of millions, dwelling in the most widely separated regions of the earth, bound together as one visible

organization,—if it be affirmed that this is what Christ meant, it may be denied and the reasons be given, first, that the existence of such a body is recognized in no other place in the New Testament, and, secondly, that no such body has ever existed in fact; for the Papal Church, and the Protestant Episcopal Church, are but rival dwarfs of their favorite ideal, “The Holy Catholic Church.” All believers, not all believers organized into one visible body, is evidently what our Lord meant, and this is the sense in which the word *church* is used in a few other places.

The only remaining passage in which the word is used in the gospels is Matt. 18: 17:—“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” That here the word denotes such a company of persons as could assemble in one place, is so generally admitted that no argument in support of the view is needed. Four authorities may be cited as examples of many. Meyer (Lutheran) :—“Here the word means a single congregation, and may be larger or smaller according to place and circumstances.” Owen (Presbyterian) :—“A congregation of believers, which at first was only one, but as Christianity spread from one country to another, became numerous and local. The use of the article denotes the particular church to which the parties belonged.” Trench (Episcopalian) :—“A single body of believers, united in one another and in Christ, and they forming a community by themselves, with all the privileges, ordinances, and means of grace essential to salvation,” and this meaning is approved by Dr. Nast (Episcopal Methodist).

Let it now be observed how often in the Acts and the Epistles the term *church* denotes a body of believers dwelling in one city. There is one case of apparent exception, though even that does not appear in our English Scriptures. To this your special attention is called, be-

cause in nearly all the English and American non-episcopal books on church polity with which I am acquainted, the passage is regarded as a strong proof-text against the Episcopal conception of a catholic church. Acts 9:31 is the passage, and it reads thus :—“Then had the *churches* rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria.” But the reading which is preferred by the highest critical authorities is ἡκκλησία (church) :—“Then had the *church* rest.” Even Bengel, as long ago as 1742, preferred the singular, and that reading has since been confirmed. The plural must certainly give way to the singular. The passage is lost to independency, but it is not gained to episcopacy, for when the historian says that the *church* had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, he is evidently thinking chiefly concerning the believers of whom the church formed in Jerusalem was composed ; for, except the apostles, that church had been scattered by persecution through those very districts. The churches which were soon formed there had never been subjected to persecution, so that it would have been superfluous to say that they had rest from persecution. Let it be further borne in mind that through the preaching of the persecuted Christians of Jerusalem, many had been converted to the faith in Phenice, Antioch, and Cyprus, who were of course incorporated as churches. But not one of these churches is included in Luke’s report concerning the church which had rest. Besides the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, there were *churches* in Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch. It follows that even with the true reading (church), the passage yields no support to the idea of one visible, organized church, consisting of all local churches.

We return, then, to the thought that often, in the Acts of the Epistles, the term *church* denotes a body of believers dwelling in one place. As Dr. Dexter, in his excellent work upon Congregationalism, says : “In more

than sixty instances this word is used in the New Testament under circumstances which naturally imply a single congregation of believers," and "as many as thirty-five different churches are directly or indirectly referred to by name in the New Testament." We read, for example, of the church in Smyrna, the church in Ephesus, the church in Pergamos, the church in Sardis, of the churches in Galatia, and we even read of the church in the house of Philemon and of the church in the house of Nymphas. But do not Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Methodists have their local churches? Do we not hear of St. Stephen's church, in Providence, of St. Paul's, in Boston, and St. Ignatius', in New York? Yet, do not Episcopalians speak of the one Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, and the Methodists of the one Methodist Episcopal Church? But, while the inspired writers speak of local churches, do they also speak of the Church of Palestine, of the Church of Asia Minor, of the Church of Macedonia? Emphatically it may be asked if they speak of any such unit as the Church of the Roman Empire. Thus it is that Baptists justify their rejection of the phrase, "The Baptist Church of the United States," and recognize only Baptist churches.

How, then, has it happened that the idea of organic church unity has taken possession of so large a part of the Christian world? How is it that such great bodies as the Papal Church, and the Greek Church, and the Lutheran Church, and the Reformed Church, and the Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church have come into being? Of this we may be certain, that the difference between such complex forms of government and the simple form reported in the New Testament is so great, that the change could no more have been effected at once than the Pyramids could have sprung into being in a day. The people should be taught when this morbid secretion of organic church unity began to appear. A

little more than two hundred years after the death of Christ, a man was converted to Christianity by the name of Cyprian. He became Bishop of the Church of Carthage, North Africa. Pious, learned and able, he yet fell into the current unscriptural views relative to church government. He conceived the unity of "The Church," as the phrase has already come to be, as external. It was difficult for Cyprian to see how a particular church could be a church of Christ unless it should acknowledge itself as connected with one great body—the Church. Churches which declined such incorporation were branded as a sect. Members of such churches were heretics. But *calling* a given body the church did not give it the unity for which Cyprian pleaded. How was that unity to be secured? The popular form of government which everywhere prevailed in the age of the apostles had already received a deadly blow. Men wanted to be bishops, and bishops became plenty. But, as children become dissatisfied with a much coveted plaything after it has been used awhile, so bishops wanted something new. Metropolitan bishoprics arose. Vanity was gratified. Ambition grew fat. Cyprian's idea of organic unity was therefore not so very difficult to be realized. Christ—so Cyprian taught—gave permanent supremacy to Peter. Peter, then, was held to be the representative of unity, and, though writing not long after the middle of the third century, Cyprian went so far as to teach that Rome was Peter's seat, though he sometimes opposed the demands of the Roman bishop. How this infant monstrosity of organic church unity, begotten by a Carthaginian bishop, grew, and how it grew in insolence and tyranny, is well-known. Even if the papacy had expired under the blows of the reformers the system of outward church unity would have survived, for Luther saw not the apostolic model of a Christian church. So the Reformation needed to be immediately reformed, and never has it ceased to need it. So far as respects church organization, Protest-

anism is a failure. God, therefore, brings forward into greater prominence another people that he may show how Christianity can flourish without the organic unification of churches and the centralization of power.

This, then, is the first answer which the first question of the discourse must receive, that a church was composed of as many persons as could conveniently assemble for the worship of God.

The second answer is, that a church was composed of only those who professed to have become disciples of Christ. Before proving this by the infallible word, let me remind you that a church might consist of men, women and children, received without condition. The members might believe something or nothing, might be regenerate or unregenerate, moral or immoral ; the mere fact of their humanity would be the basis of their membership. By this plan all the inhabitants of the earth ought to be brought into the churches as soon as possible. Thus the church and the world would be one and the same. Distinction between tares and wheat would be impossible ; they all might be tares. Distinction between sheep and goats would be impossible ; they all might be goats. Distinction between good fish and bad fish would be impossible ; they all might be bad fish. Should there be some wheat, some good fish, some sheep, it would be in spite of the plan, not because the plan required it. Dr. Bellows has recently said on behalf of the Unitarians :—“ We can and do admit all manner of men into our society ; Spiritualists, Catholics, Atheists, Infidels,—all are equally welcome.”

Instead of such an indiscriminate sweep into the church net, let it be supposed that only those may become members who have been baptized, the baptism being administered as soon as possible after natural birth. Upon the supposition that the use of water would be attended by the regeneration of the infant, we should then be sure of having churches between which and the

world would be a sharp distinction. But what is the voice of history? This plan has been tried. Though at first opposed, it was more widely adopted, till, in the course of a few hundred years, it became the common practice over all Europe, to baptize human beings when they were too young to know what was done or why it was done. These infants were supposed to be regenerated in baptism. Such persons were brought into "The Church" with no act of their own, with no knowledge of their own. Thus it is scarcely an overestimate to say that almost all Europe, almost all Western Asia, and much of North Africa, became incorporated into "The Church." But when the baptized infants became adults did they fulfill the theory that they were regenerated in baptism? The great mass of church members gave painful evidence of profound self-deception, or, in the words of Neander, of "indescribable hypocrisy." The world had been baptized into "The Church," and so "The Church" had become the world. It would be difficult to prove that there were as many regenerate men in "The Church" as there were out of it. Many of the clergy, as ministers came at length to be called, were so much given to gambling with dice, that one of the bishops caused the dice to be inscribed with names of Christian virtues.* It was thought that that would sanctify the gaming.

But it is conceivable that membership in Christian churches might be still more restricted. It would be possible to receive only such persons as had arrived at a sufficient age to choose for themselves; that is, such persons as were old enough to repent and believe, baptism being administered, not as a means of securing grace, but as an expression of grace already received; administered, therefore, after repentance and faith—not before. This plan would, of course, exclude from membership all infants. It would imply that profession of religion is a

*Neander.

voluntary act. The second plan would imply that it may be involuntary, which is a contradiction in terms—an involuntary profession of religion is an impossible conception.

The question before us, then, is this : *Which of these different forms of church membership is approved by Christ and the apostles?* The true answer can be obtained only by an appeal to that part of the Bible which speaks of Christian churches. We shall find not one word concerning Christian churches in Exodus or Leviticus, or any other part of the Old Testament. The Old Testament says much concerning the Jewish nation, and considerable in regard to a rite called circumcision, but it says nothing whatever relative to Christian churches. Begin, then, at the first verse of Matthew and read on till you come to the last verse of the Revelation, for the purpose of transcribing into a blank book every verse from which even the inference could be drawn that any person should be received into a Christian church, except upon his own voluntary profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and the blank book will be as white as when it was bought. You will have found not one example of infant church membership. Not one precept concerning it. Conscious, voluntary agents, not infants, were added to the apostolic churches, and only those conscious agents were added who professed to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit ; nay, not all those even, but only those who believed and were baptized. “They that gladly received his word were baptized. * * * And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,”—more correctly : “And the Lord added to the church the saved ones.” In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul addresses the members as saints, as believers, as brethren, as God’s children, as servants of righteousness. He addresses the members of the church in Corinth also as saints, the members of the church in Ephesus as saints, of the church in Philippi and of the church in Colosse as saints. There is not an epistle in the New Testament which does not imply

throughout that the persons addressed had all been received into churches with the understanding that they were conscious partakers of divine life through Christ, and there is no intimation that these persons had belonged to the churches in some lower sense before they belonged to it in a higher sense; as, for example, that they became half-members by natural birth or by baptism in infancy, and that they became members in full at the age of fourteen or more, by merely recognizing the promises which either their parents or persons called by that oddest of all combinations, *God-father and God-mother*, made on their behalf. Membership in an apostolic church was membership in full from the moment of baptism.

Notice, also, that members of apostolic churches might be excluded. Exclusion was expressly commanded by our Lord himself. Instances of exclusion are reported in the Acts; many and urgent commands to exclude are contained in the Epistles and the Revelation; but in nearly all cases, perhaps in all, exclusion implied that the persons excluded must be presumed never to have been regenerated. It follows that only the renewed were regarded as qualified for church membership. The church polity which denies the obligation to exclude is one of the deplorable results of indiscriminate church membership. If the unregenerate may become members of a church, why exclude? Hence, to-day prevails through a large part of the Christian world the polity, *once in never out*, whatever the character, whatever the doctrine. "Who ever heard," inquires Dr. Hawks, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, "of the excommunication of a layman from our branch of the apostolic church? Neither the General Convention nor any State Convention have" [has?] "ever provided any 'rule or process' for excommunication. There is not a clergyman in the church who—if he were desirous to excommunicate an offender—would know how to take the first step in the process.
* * * Shall * * * the presbyter alone do it, or

shall it be done by his bishop, or by a conclave of bishops, or of bishops and presbyters, or by a State Convention—including the laity, or by the General Convention—including the laity again? No man can answer it, for there is no rule on the subject.”* Is it surprising that a church which never excludes should so freely welcome persons who have been, or ought to be, excluded from other churches? Is it not natural that persons whose sense of Christian obligation is feeble should seek the sheltering freedom of such a church? In the Papal Church heresy and disregard of ritual requirements exclude; badness of character does not. Rid the Christian world of the evil of indiscriminate church membership and the necessity of exclusion would be greatly reduced, while exclusion, when necessary, would be more faithfully employed.

But how many are still far from seeing the evil of mixed membership, or, if they see it, from admitting and condemning it! The late Roman Catholic Archbishop Spalding, of Baltimore, says † that the church founded by Christ has always proclaimed the truth, that by baptism all mankind become equally children of God. The Presbyterian Book of Government says ‡:—“A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring.” If Presbyterianism rejects the dogma of baptismal regeneration, it follows that the meaning of these words is, that a church consists of regenerate and unregenerate persons. If it denies that unregenerate persons may be members of a church, it follows according to the Presbyterian creed that the infants of professing Christians are regenerated. “The apostles,” says § Dr. Philip Schaff (Lutheran) “never demanded full and formal regeneration before

* Coleman’s Manual on Prelacy and Ritualism, p. 122.

† Miscellanea; Influence of Catholicity on Civil Liberty, p. 133.

‡ Book I. Chap. 2, 4.

§ History of the Apostolic Church, p. 574. Id. p. 638.

baptism, but simply an honest longing for salvation in Christ ;" and he insists that justifying faith is wrought by the Holy Ghost in the church through the word and sacraments." Dr. William Adams, Professor of Systematic Divinity in an Episcopal Theological Seminary in Wisconsin, in a recent elaborate treatise on Baptismal Regeneration, indirectly teaches, indeed, like many other Episcopalians, that "The Church" should consist of regenerate persons. He holds that "the mass of Christians in the New World do not as yet comprehend the nature of the church as a divine organization ; Episcopalians have the true conception. Let us see, then, what the true conception is. Regeneration, according to our author, and, as he certainly proves, according to the Prayer Book, also, is conveyed in and by means of baptism. Regeneration in a revival, in one's home, in a grove, upon the highway, without baptism, is almost ridiculed. The Episcopal Church, or, as he generally expresses it, "The Church," teaches that both infants and adults receive a "new life," are made "living members of the Church," are "released from sin," are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost," are made "children of God," are "born again," "regenerated," "at the moment" of baptism. Baptism conveys grace ; introduces into the church ; unites with the mystical body of Christ. All this is accomplished for millions of unconscious infants. When each of these infants has become an adult, the question, When did you become a Christian? must of course receive for its answer :—"When I was baptized ;" and if the question is asked, "But you entertain the conviction that you have been regenerated since you emerged from the unconsciousness of infancy, and have had, therefore, some consciousness similar to that which is reported of the three thousand sinners, who, on the day of Pentecost, convicted of guilt, cried for pardon ?—if this question is asked, the answer must of course be :—"No ; I am a stranger to any such later change ; I was made a Christian in infancy by

baptism." A relative of mine who, during many years, was accustomed to attend a Baptist meeting, and there to hear from one of our most faithful and discreet ministers such views of regeneration as are commonly preached in the Baptist pulpit, became in middle life an attendant upon an Episcopal meeting. She at length became painfully conscious of sin, and to this succeeded peaceful reliance upon the Saviour. Becoming cognizant of the spiritual process through which she had passed, the rector requested her to communicate the facts to certain members of the church, who were soon to meet for some social or charitable purpose; he was persuaded that the narrative might be the means of good.* It was done, and at the conclusion of the interview, the ladies gathered around her to say that they were deeply interested in her narrative, but were strangers to the feelings which she had revealed. These ladies, I think, with scarcely an exception, were baptized in infancy, and grew up with the conviction that that made them Christians. With the utmost respect for the conscientious convictions of those who live under such a system, I must yet be permitted to say, nearly in the language of Dr. Adams himself, that according to our understanding of the word of God, "the mass" of those who accept such a system "do not, as yet, comprehend the nature of a Christian church as a divine organization." We are the more fearful of the effects of such a doctrine as that of baptismal regeneration when we are compelled to read in such a work as I have adverted to, that regeneration "demands, as prerequisites, *sincere repentance* from past sins and a *living faith*." A teacher of systematic divinity affirming that, in order to be regenerated, a man must first have "*sincere repentance* and a *living faith!*" That one should need regeneration after one has had sincere

* It should be borne in mind that Episcopal churches have no meetings for the purpose of listening to a narrative of religious experience, so called. They have not the privilege of voting upon the admission of persons who desire to become members, and have lost the right of excluding the unworthy. These powers have been assumed by the "clergy."

repentance and a living faith is a curiosity in theological teaching not to be often matched. The inference would seem to be a very logical one, that as infants can neither repent nor believe, they must fail of regeneration till they become old enough to do both; but provision is made even for this: if the infant himself cannot renounce the devil, may not another do it for him? Such was in the third century and such is to-day the theory, but in support of which there is neither Scripture nor reason. Though our churches believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration to have long been a fruitful source of corruption, yet it is regarded by this Episcopal "professor of systematic divinity" as "the fountain and the healing waters of a high spirituality of which the world has not seen the like since the days of Constantine." Baptismal regeneration "asserts" all the truths of Christianity and "is itself the result of them all. It rests upon them as their complement. It is the key-stone of the arch, the crowning stone of the pyramid." "In the doctrine of baptismal regeneration are to be found—for parents and children, for husbands and wives, for brothers and sisters, for mortal men and women, in all the relations of the family, the nation and the church—the root and elements of a Christianity so true and genuine, so lovely and tender, so pure and holy, that the world has not seen the like for fourteen hundred years." It is clear that the Professor has exhausted the English tongue in this description of the virtues of baptismal regeneration. The language of "the flowery kingdom" might furnish additional facilities.

This, then, is the conclusion to which we have come: first, that a Christian church in apostolic times was composed of as many persons as could meet together for the worship of God, and, secondly, that the members professed to believe in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of souls.

II.

WHAT WERE THE PERMANENT OFFICERS OF AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH?

The office of apostle was temporary. It was of such a nature that it could not be transmitted ; in other words, it was impossible for an apostle to have a successor. Says * Dr. C. A. Jacob (Episcopalian of England) :— “The apostles had no successors in their office. They stand alone.” Matthias himself was not successor to Judas. He merely filled the place from which Judas fell, thereby preserving the original number. He was not one of a succeeding class of apostles. If, therefore, such an office as that of bishop is authorized by the New Testament, it must be authorized on independent grounds. The apostolic age had a class of laborers called *evangelists*. They seemed to have preached the gospel in destitute regions. The modern evangelist, that is, a man who preaches the gospel in a region where preachers are already numerous, is an officer unknown in churches of apostolic times. “The name,” as Mr. Plumtre remarks,† “denotes a *work* rather than an *order*.”

The New Testament speaks of only two classes of permanent church officers ; ministers, to use the modern term, and deacons, the minister having charge of the spiritual affairs of a church, and the deacon of the temporal. The minister was sometimes called elder and sometimes bishop. The explanation is not difficult. The original word for elder was of Jewish origin ; the original word for bishop was of Greek origin. It was natural, therefore, in writing to Jews to use the word meaning *elder*, and in writing to others to use the word meaning *bishop*. Every minister was a bishop, and every minister was an elder. A few passages may be cited in proof.

* The Ecclesiastical Polity of the N. T., p. 26.

† Smith’s Dic.; Art., *Evangelist*.

In Acts 20 : 17, the writer says :—“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the *elders* of the church.” The elders came, and Paul addressed them as *bishops*; for in verse 28 we have the words : “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *bishops*,” or, as our translators have rendered the original, *overseers*. If bishops were a higher order of ministers, how could Paul address the elders as bishops? An Ephesian bishop was an elder and an Ephesian elder was a bishop. Besides if a New Testament bishop was like a modern bishop, higher in rank than other ministers, how shall we explain the fact that the Ephesian church had so many bishops? Now, many churches have but one bishop; then one church had many bishops. If bishops were different from elders, why did not Paul send for the elders *and* bishops? He sent only for elders, and when they were before him called them bishops. In the Epistle to Titus, Paul directs the young evangelist to ordain [appoint] *elders* in every city, and then, proceeding to describe the qualifications which they ought to have, calls them *bishops*: “For a bishop must be blameless.” The terms *bishop* and *elder*, then, were applied to the same officer. Conybeare and Howson (Episcopalians) say :—“We see here a proof of the early date of this epistle, in the synonymous use of “*επίσκοπος*” [bishops] “and *πρεσβύτερος*” [elder]. Another English Episcopal writer, already quoted, Dr. Jacob, says that the offices of presbyters [elders] and deacons were established by the apostles themselves: “while the episcopacy, in the modern acceptation of the term, and as a distinct clerical order, does not appear in the New Testament, but was gradually introduced and extended throughout the church at a later period.”

In two passages (Phil. 1: 1; I. Tim. 1: 8.) Paul makes such allusions to bishops and deacons as to show that he regarded them as the only church officers known. Had the apostle written: “With the bishops, and the elders,

and the deacons," it must have been admitted that there were three classes of church officers, but he says only this : "With the bishops and deacons." So in I. Tim. 3 : 1-12, he speaks of the qualifications of church officers, and yet speaks of only two kinds of officers. In not one place in the New Testament do we read of bishops, elders and deacons, and were a list of the qualifications of bishops and elders to be arranged in two columns, and a list of their duties also in two columns, you could write either *bishop* or *elder* over either, and neither would be inappropriate. A bishop, then, must have been the same as an elder.

An attempt has been made to show that James was bishop of Jerusalem, Timothy of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete,—bishop in the modern sense, which, of course, means that each had charge of a diocese, that each was placed over other ministers, that each had the exclusive right to ordain ministers and to confirm, all of which things are without the shadow of proof. As Mr. Plumtre says, Timothy exercised his authority as a vicar-apostolic rather than a bishop. Bengel says :—"Timothy, at Ephesus, and Titus, at Crete, were not bishops." After certain men became dissatisfied with the common ministerial office and were elevated to a rank above other ministers, and were bishops in an unscriptural sense, while all other ministers were denied the title, then some of the fathers are heard to apply the word *bishop* in the new and wide sense to James, Timothy and Titus, but we are as well able to judge what the Scriptures say concerning the matter as were the fathers. Most of the fathers showed little skill as interpreters of the word.

So few and simple were the offices of a Christian church. In this respect how unlike the apostolic age is the present! One body, which claims to be the "Church," is governed by four patriarchs, the patriarch of Constantinople having under him one hundred and

thirty-five bishops ; of Alexandria, four bishops ; of Antioch, sixteen ; of Jerusalem, thirteen ; while the Greek Church, of Russia, has sixty-five bishops. Below each bishop are many priests, and below each priest I know not how many subordinates. Another body which calls itself the Church has, as its chief officer, one who arrogates the right to govern for Almighty God all the inhabitants of the earth. Let us see how this successor of the Galilean fisherman appeared on Christmas Day of the year of grace 1847. "At an early hour," says an American writer,* "I found the church already occupied by a great crowd. A double row of *soldiers* † stretched from the entrance to the altar, around which the Pope's *guards*, in their *fantastic uniform*, looking like the knaves in a pack of cards, were stationed, while a series of seats on either side were filled by ladies, dressed in black and wearing veils. The *foreign ambassadors* were in a place appropriated to them in the tribune. * * * In due season the Pope appeared, seated in the 'sedia gestatoria,' a sort of capacious arm chair, *borne upon men's shoulders*, flanked on either side by the enormous fan of white peacock feathers. He was carried up the whole length of the nave, distributing his blessing with a peculiar motion of the hand upon the *kneeling congregation*. * * * His dress was of *white satin, richly embroidered with gold, a costume too gaudy for daylight.*" Here the Pope said high mass in a building which cost \$47,000,000, and the annual expense of keeping which in repair is about \$30,000. Meek and lowly One! if this is the head what must the body be? Still another claims to be the "Church," its head being in England instead of Italy, the reigning sovereign, who, though "regenerated in baptism," may yet be notorious for impurity of life. Nearly the same want of apostolic simplicity characterizes this body as marks the Church

* *Six Months in Italy*, p. 146.

† The italics are ours.

of Rome,—arch-bishops, bishops, deans, arch-deacons, prebendaries and canons, and priests and deacons, and sub-deacons abounding. With some modification, this system of church offices has been reproduced in the territory covered by our republic. Here, at last, is a cardinal, swearing to persecute schismatics and heretics ; here are arch-bishops, bishops, priests, preaching deacons, ruling and presiding elders.

This multiplication of offices leads to a brood of ceremonies, and in these such appeals are made to the senses of men as to endanger if not destroy spiritual life. Let us suppose ourselves to be living in the first age of Christianity. Let us suppose Paul to be a bishop. Let us suppose him to be about to ordain a deacon. Let us suppose these to be the directions which he is required to follow :—“The bishop will enter the cathedral church, vested in purple cassock, rochet, chimera, episcopal ring, zucchetto and biretta. If he do not vest in the sacristy, he will remove his vestments from the altar. * * * On reaching the faldstool, the bishop will remove his biretta and deliver it to the deacon, who, in his turn, will deliver it to an acolyte. He will wear the zucchetto till the assumption of the mitre. The gloves will be carried on a salver.” (You will do well to remember that it is the apostle Paul to whom these directions are given.) * * * “The bishop, on being vested with the dalmatis, sits down ; and the deacon removes the episcopal ring and hands it to the sub-deacon to place on a salver held by an acolyte for that function. The gloves” (of the apostle Paul) “are then presented on a salver, and should be so arranged that the right may lie at the side of the deacon and the left at that of the sub-deacon. In putting on the gloves” (Paul’s) “the deacon assists at the right and the sub-deacon at the left.” If your spiritual nature is nauseated at the superposition which has been made, I am nevertheless under the necessity of assuring you that these very directions

are found in the Directorium Anglicanum, for the ordination of a modern preaching-deacon by a modern bishop. The power of Christianity as an organization is in its simplicity ; as a life in its spirituality. But when the spirituality which had distinguished the apostles and their fellow laborers began to wane, church officers began to be multiplied. The prime arch-heresy of Christendom was the attempt to model "the Christian Church" after the Jewish Church, as the Jewish commonwealth was improperly called, and as it is still called, even by such a writer as Dean Stanley. This was the heresy against which, by the inspiration of God, Paul fought with such lion-like courage, and which, checked by his mighty influence, re-appeared with destructive power after the apostles were taken to their reward. Temple, altar, priest, robe, sacrifice, many fasts and many feasts, had been destroyed by the divine hand, but men were not satisfied. Christianity was too simple to meet their wants. That viewed all men as priests ; it was taught that none should be priests but ministers. If ministers were priests, then like the Jewish priests they should not officiate in garments like those of the people. If ministers were priests there must be altars. So the communion table came to be called the altar. But what were an altar without a sacrifice ? So the bread was Christ's flesh, and the wine was Christ's blood, and therefore, whenever the Lord's Supper was observed, Christ was sacrificed. Not in the times of the apostles, therefore, but after the apostles were dead, originated that complex system of church offices, and attendant ritualism which now pervade so large a part of the Christian world. The less piety the more show of piety is the sad lesson of history. As to our own churches, we recognize but two divinely authorized offices, that of minister and that of deacon ; and we hold it to be the divine intention that all ministers should be equal in rank and rights. With this element of our church polity we are perfectly satisfied because we believe it to be perfectly scriptural.

III.

WHAT WERE THE POWERS OF AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH ?

Had such a church any power at all, and, if it had, how much?

From the premises already laid down it would follow, even if the Scriptures were silent concerning the matter, that every church had the exclusive management of its own affairs. If there was no provincial church, embracing within its fold particular churches, no bishop in the broader sense of that word, no church session, no General Assembly, no presiding elder and no General Conference, how would it be possible for a church to be amenable to any person or persons external to itself? Democratic or popular power, then, not aristocratic, not monarchical, must have been the characteristic of Christianity in the first century.

But we are not without the direct testimony of Scripture; yet, before citing it, let us glance at the great proof text of Romanists in support of the monarchical theory: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16: 18, 19). If these words are correctly interpreted by Romanists, the popular form of church government is not authorized by Christianity; the monarchical is the only form allowed. Let it be admitted at once that by the words "upon this rock," our Lord means Peter himself, which every Protestant scholar ought to admit. But (a.) the other apostles as well as Peter are represented as being the foundation of the church (Eph. 2: 20; Rev. 21: 14); (b.) the powers conferred upon Peter were soon, even if not then, conferred upon the other apostles (John 20: 23), and, indeed, upon an entire church (Matt. 18: 18); (c.) Peter

himself never assumed official authority over his fellow apostles; (*d*) Paul so conducted toward Peter as to show that he recognized in him no superiority of rank (Gal. 2: 11-14); (*e.*) on one important occasion James towers quite above Peter in perception and influence (Acts 15). The words of our Lord are therefore no support to the monarchical form of church government. But the Roman Catholic translation of Heb. 13: 7, says, "Remember your *prelates* who have spoken the word of God to you;" and of 13: 17, "Obey your *prelates* and be subject to them." Dogmatics have often run down and trampled over exegesis. One touch of the independent translator demolishes the fabric of monarchy as the touch of the finger has made the long buried corpse fall into a shapeless heap of ashes. "Remember those who *were* your leaders" (now dead); "Obey them who *are* your leaders" (now living).

On the other hand, let it be noticed with what power Jesus Christ has invested the people. After telling your brother's fault to him alone and to witnesses, "tell it unto the church, but, if he neglect to hear the church," appeal to the presbytery ? to the quarterly conference ? to the bishop ? "let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Whatsoever ye,"—the particular church of which the offender is a member—"shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18: 15-17). The exercise of popular power in discipline is enjoined also by the apostle Paul (I. Cor., 4, 5, 13). The early departure from the apostolic law of exclusion, continued to the present day, is well known. In the larger part of Christendom the people have no power to exclude as they have no power to admit. Admission or exclusion by pope, bishop or rector, by association, conference or council, is a usurpation of the rights of the people. By the "Discipline" of the Methodist Episcopal Church a member accused of immoral conduct must be tried, not

by the particular church of which he is a member, but by a committee of not less than five, not one of whom is necessarily a member of that church, and, if found guilty, may be expelled by the preacher in charge.* An attempt to introduce into Baptist Church polity such monarchical power in discipline would fire our ministers and churches from Maine to California.

An apostolic church had power to elect officers and appoint delegates. Even an apostle was chosen by the people (Acts 1 : 15, 23, 26), and the choice was made at the suggestion of Peter. The seven deacons were chosen not by the apostles but by "the multitude of the disciples" (Acts 6: 3). The brother who was wanted to travel with Paul was chosen by "the churches" (II. Cor., 8: 19). As a messenger and deacon, and even an apostle, were chosen by the people, it is probable that the act of Paul and Barnabas in appointing "elders in every city" (Acts 14: 23) of Asia Minor was suggestive and coöperative, the churches themselves expressing their approbation of the men whose names were proposed. Viewed as exclusively apostolic, allowing the churches no voice whatever, the act would have been quite out of harmony with the spirit and acts of the apostles in their relation to other churches. The same may be said of the direction given to Titus to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1 : 5). "As long as I live," said Wesley, "the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among Methodists."† Very different was the spirit of the apostles. The theory that every church in the wide world, in all ages, should allow some person or persons to furnish it with a pastor instead of choosing a pastor for itself, is not the fruit of true biblical exegesis, but is only a logical deduction from the unscriptural notion of organic church unity. When the Baptists shall admit that notion and the related idea of centralized power, they will allow bishops to assign them pastors.

* Discipline, 336, 337, p. 133.

† Dr. Davidson's Eccles. Pol., p. 412,

But are all Baptists consistent with their cherished notion of independence ? Imitating the Congregationalists of colonial times, a large number of our churches in New England do not have exclusive power to choose their own pastors. If Methodist churches allow other men to choose their pastors, let it be said to their praise that they have not entrusted that work, in whole or in part, to men of the world. We, on the contrary, have surrendered exclusive control of our pulpits by allowing incorporate societies to consist, in part, of persons who are not members of a church, which is contrary to the spirit and, I had almost said, to the letter, of the New Testament. The written constitution of some of these societies is so broad that the infidel, the profane, the intemperate, the card player and the licentious may become, and do become, members ; and, having both money and gift of speech, become the chief managers of the services of the Lord's house. It is admitted that such cases are exceptions ; but, however excellent the character of the men, Christianity requires that the pulpit, the meeting-house, the parsonage and the finances should be under the exclusive control of the church. In the City of Philadelphia, where are fifty Baptist churches, and, indeed, in the larger part of the United States, the New England system is unknown. Dr. Wayland, Dr. Benedict and Dr. Jackson felt that in this respect we had made a mistake, and probably all others who have given thought to the subject are of the same opinion.

Standing committees, in the judgment of some, are inconsistent with our popular form of government, but that depends on the purpose for which such committees stand and how long they stand. The church sessions of a Presbyterian church, consisting of the pastor and ruling elders, is a judicatory for the exercise of government and discipline.* It has power to receive members and power to exclude.† These elders hold office through life. Now,

* The Form of Government, Book I., chap. V.

† Book I., chap. IX., 7.

if the standing committee of a Baptist church should take even the first step in a process of discipline, and if there should be no annual election, by which one or more may go out of office and their places be filled by others, such a committee would be essentially like the church sessions of a Presbyterian church. The excellence of the men would be nothing to the point. Such a committee would not be in harmony with the Baptist idea of inspired teaching relative to church government. If it be said that such a committee acts merely as the representative of the church, it may be replied that that is precisely what the Presbyterian Book of Discipline says in defence of the church session. No Baptist church which allows its standing committee to stand year after year, for an indefinite period, without re-election, can defend its form of government against the Presbyterian form.*

The power of the people has been lost, however, chiefly through the rise of episcopacy. How, within one hundred years after the apostles, the original oneness of bishop and elder began to disappear, how *bishop* came to be applied to a small class of ministers while other ministers continued to be called *elders*, how the bishops grew in ambition, how they dared to call themselves the successors of the apostles, and to claim the name of priest in imitation of the ancient Jewish priest, and to avow the possession of such special divine aid as no others on earth had or could have; how they arrogated the exclusive right to ordain, and how, in laying on hands in ordination, they claimed that the Holy Ghost was given, and would not be given through any other fingers than their own; how diocesan power became metropolitan

* A very few cases are known in which a Baptist church has no annual election of clerk, treasurer, standing committee, or Sunday school officers and teachers. The only rotation in office is that of pastor. There are also cases in which the moneys raised for benevolent objects are never reported to the church and never entered upon the Church Record Book. Some Baptist churches seem to act upon the principle that the smaller the number of members who meet to do the business the better. These obvious violations of the requirements of the popular form of church government are doubtless the result of mere thoughtlessness.

power, and metropolitan power patriarchal power, and patriarchal power papal power,—how all this happened need not be related. Nor need it be detailed how bishops deposed bishops, how councils came into vogue, and, becoming the tools of the higher clergy, had the arrogance to demand of the churches the acceptance of creeds which they had hammered out upon their own anvils ; how bishops eat up the property of “the Church” and made themselves fat ; how, in view of their quarrels and lust, an ancient idolater said : “ Make me a bishop, and I will surely be a Christian.” *

How this hoary-headed monarchy still prevails ; how, though here and there its power has been weakened, it still wields its sceptre over the larger part of Christendom ; how, in the Roman form of development, it has brought the hottest damnation upon itself by that quintessence of all arrogance,—infallibility,—how in free England and freer America millions of human souls are ground into the dust by being denied that right “of private judgment in matters of religion in opposition to that of authority,” which Archbishop Spalding says † “is the fatal source of all this mischief”—American infidelity and indifference ; how the doctrines of apostolic succession, Episcopal ordination, and baptismal regeneration, aid in keeping priestly power in the hands of the few, and shutting the mouths of the people as to the question who may be associated with them in church-membership,—these things, also, need not be related in detail. Christians of apostolic times acknowledged “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,” and, in religious affairs, modern Baptists, by the grace of God, will not very soon be found ready to acknowledge any other.

Such is the church polity of the New Testament ; such is an apostolic church. If, in the mind of any hearer,

* Coleman's Manual, p. 84.

† Miscellanea, p. 382.

the conviction has been awakened that the discussion has been conducted with too much sharpness, it may be said that had time permitted me to bring before you a thousandth part of the error and worldliness which have arisen from the introduction of an unscriptural polity, and had propriety permitted me to uncover the depths of immorality into which bishops, priests, and people, fell before John had been in his grave three hundred years, the hearer would have blamed the speaker for undue tenderness. No man who has even a partial knowledge of the facts as they are revealed in the writings of the fathers, and no man who brings before his mind the fact that even to-day nearly the entire Christian world, Catholic and Protestant, is committed to the error that others than believers in Christ may be and ought to be members of "the Church,"—no man who knows the facts, finds it easy to speak with "a temperance that shall give it smoothness." If, then, it were possible for the Baptists of this country to become so insane as to think of dissolving their twenty thousand little, independent, Christian republics, so wonderfully united in polity, doctrine, and love, into what other people could they permit themselves to be absorbed, without committing suicide? Is there another people in the world which has yet become so leavened with our principles that we could enter into organic oneness with it without surrendering the principles which we believe to be taught in the word of God? Not one in the wide world. We hope, then, with the Lord's help, to be in the future what we have been hitherto,—the representatives of apostolic Christianity. We shall continue to insist upon apostolic baptism and shall keep baptism where almost the entire Christian world has kept it eighteen hundred years,—before the Supper; and even if all other denominations shall sacrifice their long cherished principle, putting the Supper in unnatural and unscriptural precedence, and doing it for the purpose of making a logical defence against us,—even then, with the help which

comes from above, we shall continue to bear aloft, alone, the apostolic banner :—FAITH ; BAPTISM ; THE SUPPER.

But let all be done without severity toward persons. Let us be strict in polity, respectful and loving in spirit. Error needs the aid of prejudice and asperity ; truth can win without either. Let us not mistake sectarian zeal for love of God's word. Let us not forget that in the very bodies whose errors we combat are many true children of God, toward whom—as individuals—we should cherish the spirit of Christian love. With these we should delight to hold Christian fellowship, and when the earthly conflict of opinions is ended, it will be sweet to meet them before our Father's throne.

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RELATION OF

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

TO THE

Evangelization of our Country.

A

SEMI-CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED MAY 12, 1875,

J. Torrey Smith
BY REV. J. TORREY SMITH,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, WARWICK.



BAPTIST PRINCIPLES AND EVANGELIZATION.

Matt. xiii., 33. Another parable spake he unto them ; the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.

THIS chapter is especially a chapter of parables. With others it contains several in a series, which begin with the announcing formula, "The kingdom of heaven is like." It is like several things of familiar observation which are mentioned. If we carefully examine this series of parables, we shall see that they present different aspects and relations of the saving truths of the gospel, as operating either upon the individual person, or upon the mass of humanity. In some instances both these spheres of the action of gospel truth may be included, as, possibly, in the one just read as our text. The three measures of meal may indicate the individual person, and the leaven, affecting and changing the entire quantity, may suggest the transforming power of the gospel, operating through all the elements of human nature and personality. Equally well may the leaven express those in whom the kingdom of heaven already has power, and the three measures of meal the mass of humanity to be permeated and transformed by their continuous and ever widening action and influence. "Leaven," says an authority, "as generally used, consisted of a lump of dough in a high state of fermentation, which was inserted into the mass of dough prepared for baking." The dough which operates as leaven, and the dough which is yet to be

leavened, was originally alike in nature and condition. The principle of leaven has changed the condition of the small lump, making it a fit agent to communicate the same change to the whole mass.

So applying the parable, we have some important instruction respecting the development and progress of the kingdom of heaven in the world. The kingdom of heaven is a holy principle brought into the world, whose presence and prevalence is to transform the whole world. It is first implanted in a few individual hearts. From these it passes to others, until, spreading abroad in space, and carried down in time, from age to age, the entire purpose of grace in reference to our fallen world is fulfilled.

The notion of leaven suggests how this is not to be, as well as how it is to be. Leaven working in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened, contains no idea of power acting from without. It suggests no gathering of a kingdom under one sway by any compulsion of force, no accretion of materials by external pressure, which shall bind all in one symmetrical whole by a power which cannot be successfully resisted. The elements of God's kingdom are sometimes likened to stones composing a structure. But they are such stones as no quarries ever excavated, becoming a structure in a way no mortal architect ever devised—*lively* or living stones, *growing* into a holy temple. The working of leaven is a chemical process. Insensibly it passes from particle to particle, changing the state of each separate particle, until all the particles in the mass are transformed and the whole is leavened. The kingdom of God possesses and changes one heart. That one heart, so possessed and changed, is a means of possessing and changing other hearts. Therefore the kingdom of God, in its true development and manifestation, is and must be an evangelizing power. Gospel principles and gospel influences bear sway in it, but their principles and influences can no more be confined to those now under their sway, than the leaven in-

serted into the dough can be confined to the particles which originally hold it. The leaven must work and spread, from particle to particle, till all is reached and changed. The principles and influences of the gospel, which bear sway in one heart, are equally adapted to rule in every other heart, and must go from heart to heart in an indefinite and universal dissemination; and any church or denomination calling itself Christian can justify itself in the use of that appellation only as it is an evangelizing power in the world.

I am expected to treat in this discourse of the relation of Baptist principles to the evangelization of our country. This will naturally lead to three inquiries: What are Baptist principles? How should Baptist principles act in practical evangelization? How have they acted in fact?

My present purpose will not allow me to dwell long on my first question—"What are Baptist principles?"—and at this stage of the day's interesting and varied services it cannot be necessary.

As the phrase is used in my subject it does not require me to state, what have no existence, the points of a formulated Baptist creed. There is a Baptist denomination. It exists as the visible organic expression of certain fundamental principles, which unite and hold together the Christian people associated in it. What are these principles? Concisely stated they are the following:

1. Every human being is responsible to the authority of God, as He has revealed His truth and His will in His word; and, being accountable to this authority in these personal relations to God, no human power can rightfully claim any coercive authority over him.

2. The revelation of the truth and will of God in His word is plain and easy of apprehension, so that the common human reason, aided by the Holy Spirit, promised to all who seek it, can see what that truth declares and what that will requires.

3. All who accept that revealed truth and yield to that revealed will, will naturally affiliate and act together in maintaining and disseminating that truth.

These principles I call Baptist principles, not because, when abstractly stated, Baptists are the only Christian people who will accept them. Perhaps, stated abstractly, most Christians would accept them, at least for substance of doctrine; but, however that may be, Baptists do accept them, theoretically and practically, in the abstract and in the concrete, for substance and in detail, and with them all their logical consequences. And so it necessarily follows that they must be denominationally what they are, and can be nothing else. It is the logical development of these principles which explains and justifies every supposed peculiarity of the Baptist denomination.

Thus we have here the substance and the limit of the Baptist doctrine of soul liberty. What does soul liberty mean? It means that the State has no power to coerce the conscience, and when it attempts it it usurps an authority which belongs to the Lord of the conscience alone—just this and no more. The question of more or less liberty in the internal ecclesiastical or denominational administration, has nothing whatever to do with soul liberty. Toleration is a word that has no place in connection with Baptist principles, neither without nor within. Not without, for Baptists accept not toleration from the State. They demand the protection due from the State to all peaceable subjects in their own free religious action. And not within. As respects error and sin within the proper scope of church action, Baptist principles are the essence of intolerance. They recognize and establish no broad church, covering with its ample shield all sorts of opinions and practices claimed to be honestly gathered from the Scriptures. Baptist principles recognize no such soul liberty as this; and, without further elucidation, I content myself with saying that the first two of the principles now stated make men Bible Christians and Baptists. The third makes them a Christian denomination.

II. But now we have to inquire, How should these principles act in practical evangelization? What is there in them of gospel leaven? And

1. These principles hold every individual in a position of personal responsibility to God. They bring each separate person face to face with the truth of God, as He has revealed it in His word. They press upon each individual such great, soul-absorbing questions as these:—“What has God revealed of Himself, of His own nature and His relations to me? What has He revealed to me of myself, of my moral nature and spiritual state, of my relations to Him and to all around me, and of the duties and obligations depending upon these relations? What has He revealed of the to me great unknown future, of my possible or probable destiny in that future?” These are great questions, going down into the lowest depths of consciousness and of conscience, as mountains, which the lower their foundations sink into the depths of the earth the higher do their summits reach into and above the clouds. Such questions as these, pressed with all their inherent power upon the soul, necessarily awaken thought and enforce conviction. They reveal native corruption and guilt, and deep with vital spiritual needs, such as no human power or earthly resource can reach. They press the necessity of a personal experience of the saving grace of God. They lead to Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. They lead to anxiety about having such a personal experience of salvation and a careful scrutiny of the evidences and fruits of it; and the necessary result of such conviction and experience is to make one solicitous to know, and freely and fully to accept, all the truth in respect to human salvation which the word of God reveals, and to walk humbly in all the ordinances and commandments imposed by that word upon all who have experienced that salvation.

2. Every individual who feels this responsibility to God and acts in accordance therewith, has the same conviction in reference to every other person that he has in

reference to himself. Every other person has the same direct responsibility to God that he has, and the same personal accountability to His revealed truth. The relations in which he stands to God, are the common relations of humanity, and the duties which spring from them are the common duties of humanity. The needs which he feels, and which have stirred his soul, are the needs of all, because they spring from the universal fallen condition of the race. He cannot separate himself in his convictions from all around him. Essentially he is no better or worse than all others. And as all have the same need with himself they have the same privilege with himself for its removal. The convictions which have filled and overpowered his soul, should fill them with the same overpowering force. The experience which he has felt, all others equally with himself need to feel. And having been led into these convictions and experiences by visible and appreciable efforts, he feels himself bound by the weightiest obligations to apply all personal influences and all means at his disposal, to lead others into the same personal convictions and soul experiences.

Thus these principles, beginning in their action with individuals, resolve the entire mass of humanity into individuals, having like responsibilities, like needs, like duties, and like privileges. However men may be organically combined or associated, whether by natural or artificial ties, no possible tie of human association can interfere in the least degree with the personal relation of each separate individual to God, and the personal accountability to God which grows out of that relation. And such being the individual responsibility alike of all, no man who has been awakened to an earnest personal conviction of this, and has received the personal experience of salvation, has the least right to be indifferent to the spiritual state of any one whom his influence or efforts can reach. These principles make every man his brother's keeper in respect to these great relations, and

the duties and needs growing out of them. And they make it not the duty only but the privilege, the joy of every one who has heard the call, come, to say, come, to to all whom his power of utterance can reach.

Now the relation of all this to evangelization may be easily seen. These principles, carried out in personal convictions and experiences conforming thereto, must make every disciple a center of evangelizing power and influence. Every disciple will not be a preacher—will not with voice and tongue proclaim to dying men their peril and their way of escape, but every disciple must have the spirit of evangelization. Every disciple must have his soul moved with desire that others may have their eyes opened to see their condition, and obtain the blessed experience of salvation. That spirit and desire, beginning with individual, will lead to combined influence and efforts. Those who feel these desires, moved by these common views and experiences, must and will associate together. Individual convictions on such vital points, and of such force and strength, must bring into associated relations those who hold them. Common sympathies of such depth and power must make those who entertain them one. And when we add to this the necessity of uniting for the successful prosecution of the evangelizing work, the spirit of which pervades each individual heart, we see a sufficient reason for that affiliation and association which is an essential part of the operation of the principles we are now considering.

III. One more inquiry remains to be considered : How has the history of the Baptist denomination in this country illustrated the action of these principles, which are Baptist principles, in the work of evangelization ?

In the early development of the Baptist denomination in this country, no religious characteristic was more distinct and prominent than the prevalence among those who were attached to it, of a conviction of personal accountability to God and responsibility to his revealed

truth. They felt themselves under the immediate sway and control of the will of God as they found it revealed in His word. Their minds were possessed with strong and controlling convictions which had their origin just here. This was the deep tap-root of all their religious character. They must have a personal conversion, and when they were converted it was in the action of such convictions as these. They had a conscious *experience* of conversion. They had no idea of religion in the heart without an experience of it. Hence a phrase current in the old time, full of meaning,—*experiencing religion*—which has almost become obsolete, at least in its emphasis of meaning. Has the idea become obsolete, too? To them a Christian experience was a vital thing. It was a fact which had its roots down in the depths of the soul, and its flower and fruit in all the purposes, and spirit, and aims of a changed life.

Equally deep and thorough was their conviction that all others had the same need of an inward experience of conversion. The authority of God was operative over all others as over them. Every individual needed, as they did, to be born again. Every individual needed a personal faith in Christ and a personal evidence of acceptance with God. And all who enjoyed that experience, feeling the need of all others to enjoy it, were earnest in their desire that they should be partakers of it. And so all who had the ability of effective address were led to go forth, proclaiming the gospel call to all who would hear it.

This was the precise way in which the early Baptist preachers were raised up. They were first *converted*, and converted to be preachers, their call to preach being often in their experience of conversion and a part of it. Sometimes, like John Bunyan, they began to preach before they really dared to hope for themselves, so powerful were their convictions of gospel truth and the duty of all to give heed to it. The word of the Lord was a fire in their bones and they must speak. Says one of these

preachers, after describing his conviction, and the fact that God revealed His Son to him and in him, "I then," he says, "saw a world lying in wickedness, and the necessity of men being made new creatures fell with weight on my mind and I felt myself disposed to speak to them about it, which was surprising to them that heard me, the rather because it came from such a noted sinner." They sought neither settlement nor salary. They sought only hearers—dying men who needed salvation. The earliest Baptist preachers were essentially itinerants. They felt called to go forth, under the ever binding law, "As ye go, preach." They might have a pastoral charge, but in no such sense as to hinder their going wherever doors of utterance opened to them. Every Baptist minister was an Evangelist, in the New Testament sense of that word. Often in those early times they were looked upon as intruders. Religious intolerance did not lack law which it could use against them, but the arm of persecution could not stop their preaching. They might be bound in prison, but the word of God was not bound. They preached to fellow prisoners, or through prison grates to congregations gathered without to hear them. Or, persecuted in one place, they went to an other, and everywhere they went preaching, and wherever they went men heard them and many were turned to the Lord. Sometimes a single sermon in a place kindled a fire which burned and spread after the preacher had passed on, a church being the result.

As an illustration of the almost necessary action of Baptist principles in evangelization, I give the following instance: In the year 1763 a Baptist minister, whose name history has preserved, was travelling from the eastern part of Connecticut into Massachusetts. He stopped for a night in one of the border towns of the State, where he preached a single sermon. One young man, "a leader in sin and vanity," being present in the little congregation, was pricked in the heart. The

preacher went on his way, but in the course of some weeks the young man found peace in believing, and immediately began to exhort his neighbors with saving effect. The leaven worked, and in a few years a Baptist church was constituted, with this convert for its pastor. That church still exists, celebrating its centennial the year before the Warren Association did the same thing. True to the principles which gave it birth, it has sent forth ministers and missionaries even to the other side of the globe. Early Baptist history bears witness to many such cases. So Wickenden from Providence, and afterwards Wightman from South Eastern Connecticut, carried the light of truth and the fire of religion to New York City. So Morse from Wightman's neighborhood, into the south part of Berkshire, Mass., and Werden from Rhode Island into the north; and so Leland proclaimed the gospel from New England to Virginia, and over several of the eastern counties of that State, and then back again to Massachusetts. There are examples of many Baptist preachers of the olden time, men who were always *going*, always preaching, and ever baptizing those who believed.

But this manner of working was when Baptists were relatively few, and in the period of individual rather than associated effort; when they were sowing, not dragon's teeth, but pure gospel seed, to bring up men armed in the panoply of God, to do God's work in all the broad land, and over the round world. As they increased in members and in churches, individual efforts, still effective, were supplemented and rendered more effective by associated efforts. The first union of churches in associations was, in part, for mutual counsel and mutual aid under the oppressions which they suffered from the prevalent spirit of intolerance in those times. But closely joined to this was the idea of union for more effective work in evangelization, which, as ecclesiastical legislation abated its ancient vigor, and at

length universally settled down on the basis of Baptist principles, left this work as the principal reason for such organization. And indeed, so far as all Baptist denominational organization exists, its sole basis and object is to secure a greater effectiveness in this work of evangelization. And hence it has followed, as it must necessarily follow, their principles being such as have been described, that the more Baptists have increased in numbers, the greater has been the ratio of their increase. Great and unparalleled as the numerical increase of the Baptist denomination in this country within the century of the country's existence has been, it is a fair test of the relation of Baptist principles to general evangelization. No denomination has grown less by proselytism from other Christian bodies than the Baptist. It had nothing to attract numbers to itself except the simple truth of the gospel. Certainly through the larger part of this century of growth, almost every where the social forces have been repellent rather than attractive. Christian people, led by the power of truth alone to Baptist churches, have been constrained to "take up the cross, the shame despise"—the social cross, the social dis-honor. Undoubtedly to many persons the cross has been too rough and heavy for even decided convictions of truth and duty, so little has it been that people of no positive religious convictions have been drawn by worldly attractions within its communion. But here has been the secret of its power. The tendency has ever been to the repletion of its ranks with earnest and positive Christian men and women.

The close affiliation and association of Baptists grows out of their principles. No external power or pressure has ever kept or can ever keep the Baptist denomination in unity. The fundamental necessity of individual convictions of truth have kept us from a denominational creed. We have no Nicene or other written symbol to be said or sung; no Nine-and-Thirty or any other

number of articles, wherewith to measure ministers or members. With us the Bible alone is authoritative. But while it is a Baptist principle that personal individual conviction lies at the basis of all heart religion and all church union, it has also ever been a Baptist principle that honest convictions will find all truth which is necessary to salvation and to orderly church association essentially alike. It is not a Baptist principle that individual conviction and mental independence shall destroy all unity. As a denomination we have never tolerated the absurdity that Baptist principles mean that all who claim honestly to find their faith and practice in the Bible, whatever their faith and practice may be, have an equal right in one fellowship. Baptist principles require that honest religious convictions will find in the Scriptures what the general Christian reason and sense find there. And so, with no general Baptist creed, simple intelligent earnestness has caused the Baptist denomination to be the most compactly united Christian body in the land.

Nevertheless, its great unifying principle is its mission of evangelization. Simply and solely by the action of its principles the Baptist denomination is a power for evangelization. This is what it was while it was yet in the gristle, this is what it has been in its strength of manhood, and this is what it must continue to be, or it will be false to its nature and its name. To-day a local secular print declares that the Baptists are doing more for the evangelization of Western Massachusetts than all other denominations combined. This should be no more than the truth, for such as these are the sole reasons for the existence of our denomination. Its basal foundation and its warrant to exist is the commission of the Lord of the church Go make disciples in all the world, evangelizing every creature, baptizing all who believe, and teaching those who are baptized to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded. While faithful to this

mission we have the promise, "Lo I am with you!" On this condition He has been with us in the past, and on this condition alone will He be with us, "even unto the end of the world."

This, fathers and brethren, is our mission in this State Convention. To this work, as it develops itself in our own field, we are called upon to gird ourselves afresh. Auspicious and inspiring is the hour. Our backward look to-day is not only of our local work for a half-century, but also of our general work for a century, marked and attested by our wondrous century's growth. All the traditions and all the history of our past cry to us, "what God hath wrought!" and urge us on to our immediate task, which is nothing less than to take and to hold our little State for Christ, and by His blessing make it like Eden, like the garden of the Lord. But no state lines may limit us. Parish lines, town lines, state lines were nothing to our fathers, and should be nothing to us. Our commission is to all the world, and nothing less than the world should limit our sympathies and our efforts. In some real and practical sense it must be true of us which was spoken of those who first received the commission under which we act—"and they went forth and preached every where;" and then it will also be true in our future as it has been in our past—"the Lord working with them, and conforming the word with signs following. Amen."



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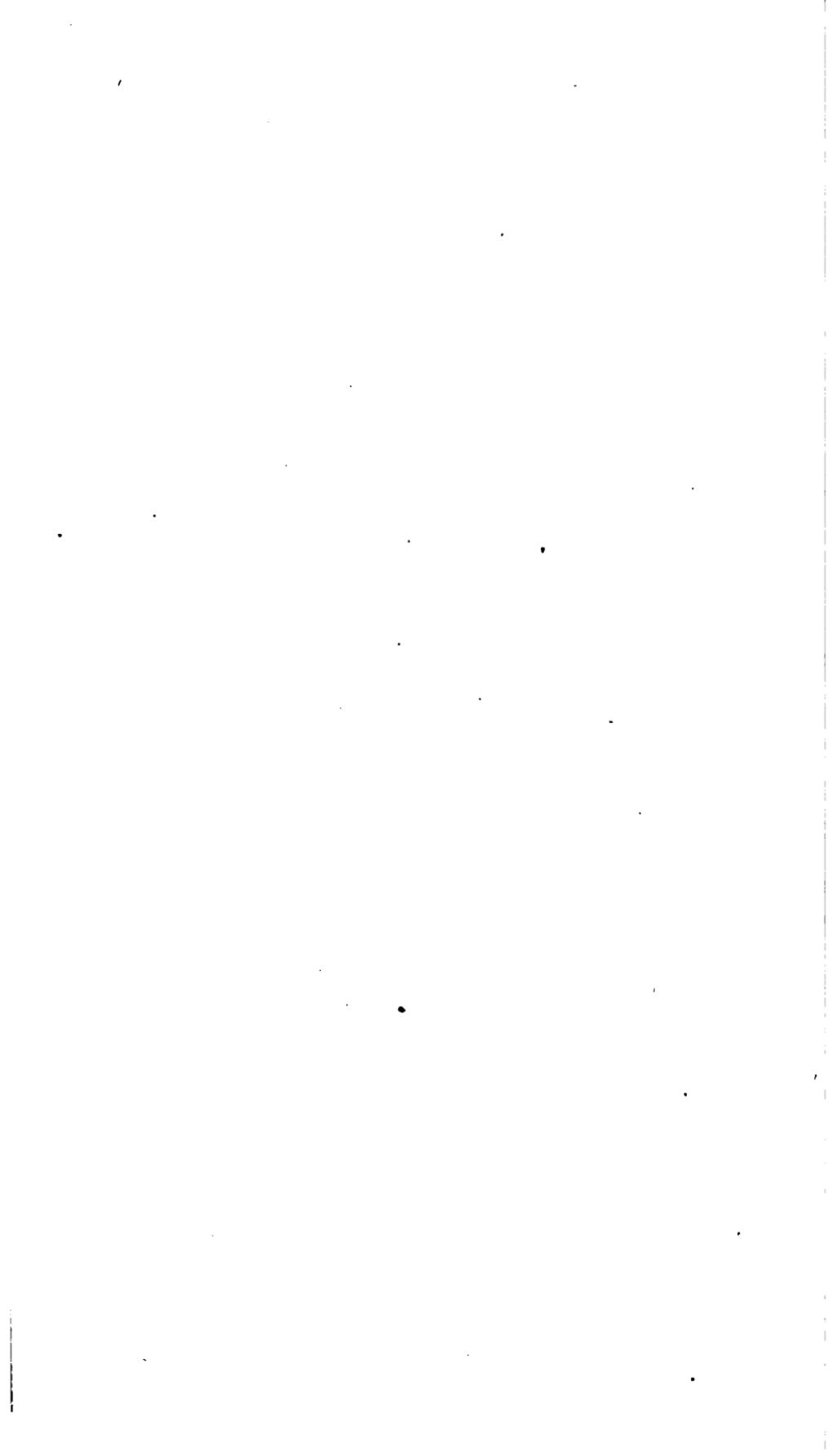
A

COMMEMORATIVE ODE,

DELIVERED MAY 12, 1875,

Sylvanus
BY REV. S. DRYDEN PHELPS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE JEFFERSON STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE.



COMMEMORATIVE ODE.

The vernal flowers in bloom to-day,
The coronal of leaf-robed May,
Breathing sweet fragrance on the air,
And spreading beauty every where,
Are prophets fair of brighter blaze
Of summer blooms in sunnier days.

The budding growths, though little things,
Are oft the clear foreshadowings
Of what shall be in coming years,
When earth's full harvesting appears.
The ages toil—slow lapses time,
But with its movement sure, sublime,
Comes the rich fruitage, sought so long
In prophet's voice and poet's song.

What faith surveys will meet the sight—
“At evening time it shall be light,”
When culminates the age of gold.
“The days of heaven on earth” foretold,
Are not a dream of man's repose,
Nor brilliant hues at day's soft close,
Nor meteor showers in night's advance,
Nor visions of a heavenly trance.
They come by growth of laboring years :
At first the springing “blade” appears ;
Long periods see the “ear” mature ;
And the “full corn” at last is sure.

The noblest manhood sought or found,
 The soul where loveliest charms abound,
 The spirit-grace that life illumines,
 Where virtue in all sweetness blooms,
 Are not frail broidery worn for show,
 As earth is robed by earliest snow ;
 But ripened fruit, so pure and fair,
 Reached by a season's constant care,
 Which dew and rain, and cold and heat,
 Sunshine and cloud have made complete.
 Whate'er adorns and crowns the life,
 From suffering, toil, unwearied strife,
 Is wrought, the purest robe of love,
 Whose warp and woof long years have wove.

The past, by progress and decay,
 Has made us what we are to-day :
 Whate'er we prize and hold in store
 We have from those who lived before :
 On rugged fields they wrought with care ;
 We enter in, the fruits to share.
 Scorn not this wealth in trust bestowed,
 Nor lose the source from whence it flowed ;
 For past and present meet and blend,
 As fifty years here find their end.

We oft portray our fleeting days
 As airy nothings, meteor blaze.
 Shadows were not, nor vapors dim,
 Nor dying strains of vesper hymn.
 Our work abides when we are gone ;
 Our footprints crystallize in stone !

The timid springtime wakes and flies,
 Or seems exhaled 'neath warmer skies ;
 Summer's resplendent glories fade ;
 Autumn's bright tints o'er fields are laid ;

Meanwhile the harvest grew apace,
 Ripened and found its garnered place,
 Youth's blooming years and manhood's day
 Like seasons go—their lessons stay.

No past have we, the boon's not ours,
 Till pale and drop the first fair flowers,
 Our minds take not life's deep intent
 Till well we scan its history spent,
 The problem's solved in care and toil—
 Those are our teachers, thence our spoil,
 Time gone, the bliss and pain it brings,
 Come back in deeper, nobler things.
 Grand heritage ! and naught can wrest
 This glorious past when once possest :
 Its lessons true, affections pure,
 Will changeless ever more endure !

Those stalwart souls, so noble, true,
 O'er fifty years that rise to view,
 Wrought till their day of toil was o'er,
 Then joined the faithful gone before,—
 That grand succession, from the year
 That truth and right were planted here.
 They passed—how like a tale that's told
 Life to its measured limit rolled :
 Though words are gone, and sounds have died,
 The story lives—t will e'er abide !
 In what they were, in acts they did,
 Past generations ne'er are hid.
 They're ours, because they're here no more,
 But left us mantles once they wore.
 Our riches, best emotions felt,
 Are virtues rare that in them dwelt !

Have we, on better cultured ground,
 Life's ladder climed to loftier round ?
 From manhood built, with nicer art,
 A grander temple of the heart ?

Scorn not the steps, moss-grown and gray,
 Nor scaffoldings that fall away.
 As well the lake, from full clear bed,
 Disdain the streams by which 'tis fed ;
 As well the noon tide glory scorn
 The earlier rays from which 'twas born.
 The tree, to large proportions grown,
 Was nursed by fallen leaves its own.
 From its decay more verdure springs,
 And richer fruit on each bough swings.
 Thus in all earnest human strife,
 From ashes grace, from death comes life.
 Ages of toil, pain, hopes and fears.
 Advance the world toward brighter years.

Hence comes the better, wealthier dower,
 Though imperfections mark the hour.
 Science enlarged seeks man's relief,
 Augments his joy, allays his grief ;
 Freedom diffused, by law insured,
 Brings equal rights for all secured ;
 True faith and broader Christian love
 Unite all souls born from above.

'Tis fifty years ! how well they wrought,
 Who then, besides the souls they sought,
 Built up, by earnest hearts and hands,
 The shepherd's feeble, scattered bands.
 The flocks they fed, the folds prepared,
 And toil and trial freely shared.
 Their service true, their faith, their prayers,
 Seed sown and watched with tears and cares ;
 Foundations laid in wisdom, hope ;—
 Plans well devised for breadth and scope ;—
 Thence the rich fruitage of the past,
 And blessings large that long shall last.

What though in learning not so broad,
 None the less strong their trust in God ;
 If humbler temples heard their voice,
 Their message made the saints rejoice,
 While sinners trembling felt its power
 And dated hence their souls' birth-hour.
 As to God's house the crowds repair,
 If no fine carriage bore them there,
 But in the saddle or behind,
 Or more on foot with willing mind,
 In household group or friendly throng,
 They went, and worshipped all day long.

If no stained windows gave them light,
 Nor rich soft carpets met their sight,
 Nor cushioned ease of modern pew,
 Helped them endure the service through ;
 If no grand organ from its throne
 Gave them its loudest, lowest tone ;
 If high square pews confined their forms,
 And foot-stoves cheered in winter storms ;
 If pulpits placed the preacher higher,
 And pitch-pipes led the chorus choir,
 'Twas a heart service brought them there ;
 They heard the truth, and God their prayer ;
 Their songs of praise bore up the soul
 Where heavenly anthems ever roll.

If we, advanced these fifty years,
 Find that a brighter day appears ;
 More cultured fields before us spread,
 And clearer skies are overhead ;
 That richer gifts around us fall,
 And better blessings come to all ;
 If ampler means, from bounteous Heaven,
 Into our hands are freely given,
 Bear well in mind the truth profound,
 So much the more by these we're bound.

These trusts bestowed, not undesired,
Suggest the faithful use required ;
And oft that grand review forecast,
Where man must meet his life at last !

We mark to-day time's rapid flight ;
The father's rest in heaven's own light ;
We toil, we wait—are moving on
To the bright realm where they have gone !
We reap where they once sowed the field ;
We sow to-day—what shall it yield ?
What shall our work and record be
When comes again the Jubilee ?

HYMNS.

BY REV. FREDERIC DENISON,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, WOONSOCKET.

TUNE—*Shining Shore.*

Thy mercies, Lord, of olden days,
Our faith-lit eyes discerning,
Our harps we tune to hymns of praise,
Our hearts with gladness burning,
While here we meet where Williams' feet
Made beauteous these Plantations—
A chosen land, by Thy command,
For Freedom's revelations.

Soul-Liberty we owe to Thee,
Here first securely planted,
Where now we sound the Jubilee,
O'er all our nation chanted ;
Thy hand we sing, and tributes bring
From fathers' faithful sowing,
And fain would prove our graterul love
By ampler harvests growing.

Thy name be praised, that, one in soul,
Now Puritan and Quaker
With Baptist join, 'neath love's control,
To glorify their Maker ;

Thus joyous round this camping ground
 Of bright historic story,
 Thy Providence our confidence,
 In Christ alone we glory.

Our What-Cheer Rock, Thy word, O God ;
 Our Conscience-Guide, Thy Spirit ;
 Our Williams' Spring, the brotherhood,
 That flows from Jesus' merit,
 And o'er all coasts, to loyal hosts,
 In holy salutation,
 "What Cheer" we cry, and raise on high
 Thy standard of salvation.

TUNE—*Auld Lang Syne.*

Sing we the Providence of God,
 While sharing sweet repose,
 Where freedom's lone apostle trod,
 And planted Sharon's rose.
 On pagan hills the Lord distilled
 His gentle dews of grace,
 Till happy homes and churches filled
 The solitary place.

The exile's refuge in the wild
 To-day is far renowned ;
 The Lord on Freedom's altar smiled,
 But on Oppression's frowned ;
 The lesson old, of sling and stone,
 Here taught the world anew :—
 A thousand put to flight by one ;
 Ten thousand foiled by few.

The marching ages disenthralled
 Our race from ancient wrong ;
 By power divine “a people small
 Becomes a nation strong.”
 To firmly hold Thy Banner, Lord,
 By Jordan’s wave unfurled,
 In trust, obedient to Thy word,
 To bear it round the world.

Our Hope and Anchor, holding fast,
 Deep grounded in thy word,
 Empowered to meet each angered blast,
 In strength by Thee conferred,
 As loftiest theme of Jubilee,
 Thy grace in Christ we boast—
 The joy of souls on earth set free,
 And song of heavenly host.

H Y M N.

BY REV. PRESTON GURNEY,

PASTOR OF BAPTIST CHURCH, CENTRAL FALLS.

TUNE—*Royalty.*

Ascription of praises ! with hearts and with voices,
 Thy people their song-birth of gratitude bring :
 With hearts and with voices, with wishes and choices,
 In Jubilee crowning their King.

Thus far hast thou brought us ; the years in thanksgiving,
 Unite in our off’ring ; Thy praises prolong.
 The years in thanksgiving, their burdens are bringing,
 Each off’ring a burden of song.

And hither assemble, the day's half-centennial ;
The hours and the minutes as sands by the sea,
The days half-centennial, with glances millennial,
Are singing, Jehovah, of Thee.

Ascription of praises ! as waves of the ocean,
Our hearts to the winds of Thy spirit reply :
As waves of an ocean, heart-flecked with emotion,
Our Earth-song ariseth on high.

Historical and Statistical Record.

BY THE SECRETARY,

REV. S. S. PARKER, D. D.,

Pastor of the Friendship Street Baptist Church, Providence.

HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL RECORD.

BY THE SECRETARY, REV. S. S. PARKER, D.D., PASTOR OF FRIENDSHIP STREET CHURCH, PROVIDENCE.

YEAR	PLACE.	PRESIDENT.	SECRETARY.	PREACHER.	TEXT.	BAPTISMS.		Money expended.
						Churched and set apart as comes occupied.	Deaths.	
1805	Providence.....	Stephen Gano.....	David Benedict.....	William Gammell.....	Haggai 1: 8.....	.....	.....	\$292
1826	"	"	James N. Seaman.....	John C. Welsh.....	Matthew 24: 14.....	* * *	*	346
1827	"	"	"	"	Galatians 6: 9.....	.....	.....	696
1828	"	"	Pharcellus Church.....	Pharcellus Church.....	Proverbs 3: 9.....	.....	.....	441
1829	Second, Newport.....	David Benedict.....	William Phillips.....	Alexis Caswell.....	Isaiah 45: 1.....	.....	.....	.....
1830	First, Providence.	John C. Welsh.....	"	Robert E. Pattison.....	1 Corinthians 6: 20.....	.....	.....	.....
1831	" Pawtucket.....	"	"	Benjamin C. Graton.....	Daniel 7: 13, 14.....	.....	.....	861
1832	Fall River.....	"	"	John O. Choules.....	John Dowling.....	5	.....	968
1833	Warren.....	"	"	"	John Dowling.....	.....	.....	.....
1834	First, Providence.	Robert E. Pattison.....	"	John Bain.....	Daniel 9: 18, 19.....	6	.....	644
1835	Second, Newport.....	"	"	Bradley Miner.....	Corinthians 1: 23.....	9	34	1,100
1836	Pine St., Providence.	John C. Welsh.....	Joseph A. Warner.....	Joseph A. Warner.....	2	10, 16,	9	1,113
1837	First, Pawtucket.....	"	"	Thomas B. Ripley.....	Luke 24: 47.....	6	120	783
1838	" Providence.....	"	"	Arthur A. Ross.....	Mark 16: 16.....	12	261	486
1839	Warren.....	"	"	William Hague.....	Roman 1: 16.....	10	58	928
1840	Second, Newport.....	"	"	John C. Welsh.....	Timothy 1: 11.....	9	87	1,061
1841	Fourth, Providence.....	Robert E. Pattison.....	John Dowling.....	John 2: 14.....	Luke 24: 47.....	11	177	1,170
1842	First, Providence.....	John Dowling.....	James N. Granger.....	Thomas Seaver.....	John 17: 18.....	9	184	2,734
1843	Pine St.,	"	"	"	Zedekiah S. Bradford.....	John 17: 18.....	9	37
1844	Third,	"	"	Francis Smith.....	Josiah P. Tustin.....	8	18	2,085
1845	Fourth,	"	"	Bernard P. Chapman.....	Matthew 11: 6.....	7	41	1,181
1846	First,	"	"	"	James N. Granger.....	Matthew 10: 8.....	9	1,560
1847	Phine St.,	"	"	"	"	Isaiah 45: 11.....	23	2,187
1848	Third,	"	"	"	"	George A. Willard.....	10	40
1849	Fourth,	"	"	"	"	Ephesians 6: 13.....	12	25
1850	First,	"	"	"	"	Zachariah 14: 8, 9.....	10	33
1851	Central, Newport.....	"	"	Robert A. Fuyle.....	"	14	19	1,895
1852	First, Pawtucket.....	"	"	Ruben A. Guild.....	Luther D. Hill.....	Numbers 13: 20.....	14	67
1853	" Providence.....	"	"	Joseph C. Hartshorn.....	Frederick Denison.....	Acta 20: 31.....	13	1,914
1854	"	"	"	Warren Randolph.....	Edward Sawyer.....	Roman 3: 31.....	12	17
1855	Wickford.....	Henry Jackson.....	"	"	James E. Simmons.....	Romans 3: 31.....	14	119

1856 Warren	Henry Jackson.....	Joseph A Tillinghast.....
1857 First, Providence.....	" " "	Austin H. Stowell.....
1858 Central, " "	" " "	Francis Smith.....
1859 First, Pawtucket.....	" " "	Abraham H. Granger.....
1860 Brown St., Providence	" " "	Samuel Adam.....
1861 Third,	" " "	Christopher Rhodes.....
1862 Fourth,	" " "	Henry Jackson.....
1863 Second, Hopkinton.....	Jonathan Brayton.....	Abraham H. Granger.....
1864 First, East Greenwich.....	" " "	Adoniram J. Padefford.....
1865 " Providence.....	" " "	Samuel L. Caldwell.....
1866 Second, Newport.....	" " "	Charles E. Smith.....
1867 Central, Providence.....	" " "	William S. McKenzie.....
1868 Fourth,	" " "	Henry C. Graves.....
1869 Friendship St., Providence,	Abraham H. Granger.....	John 17; 21.
1870 Stewart St., "	" " "	Bohan P. Byram.....
1871 First, Pawtucket.....	Samuel L. Caldwell.....	Amos F. Spalding.....
1872 " Providence.....	" " "	Oliver P. Fuller.....
1873 Fourth, Providence.....	Shubael S. Parker.....	Charles A. Snow.....
1874 Central,	Comfort E. Barrows.....	Theodore W. Sheppard.....
1875 Brown St., "	George Bullen.....	Henry C. Graves.....
		George Bullen.....
		Connell E. Barrows.....
		Shubael S. Parker.....
		1 Corinthians 1: 23.....
		12 497
		16 35
		3,760
		\$1,058
		18 23
		10 11
		10 11
		18 23
		12 200
		12 131
		13 131
		7 9
		9 6
		6 11
		11 104
		7 1,382
		9 7
		12 23
		17 53
		16 289
		16 2,600
		13 363
		16 838
		15 326
		15 3,094
		12 233
		12 2,590
		12 378
		13 2,660
		13 169
		10 35
		11 248
		12 497
		3,635
		16 35
		3,760

The Convention was organized May 12th, 1825, in the vestry of the First Baptist Meeting-House. Adjourned to August 4th of same year, for further deliberation and the election of officers.

* During these years, the work of the Convention appears to have been done chiefly by General Missionary Agents, rather than by settled Pastors.

† A meeting of the Convention was also held in June of this year, at which Rev. R. A. Fife was Preacher; test, 1 Corinthians 3: 6. Several reports were also made on various benevolent objects, by committees appointed for the purpose.

‡ Two meetings of the Convention, owing to a change in the time of holding the Anniversary, were held this year.

†† Amount for the half year.

